

THE GREAT SYMBOLS

W.J. TOWNSEND
D.D.



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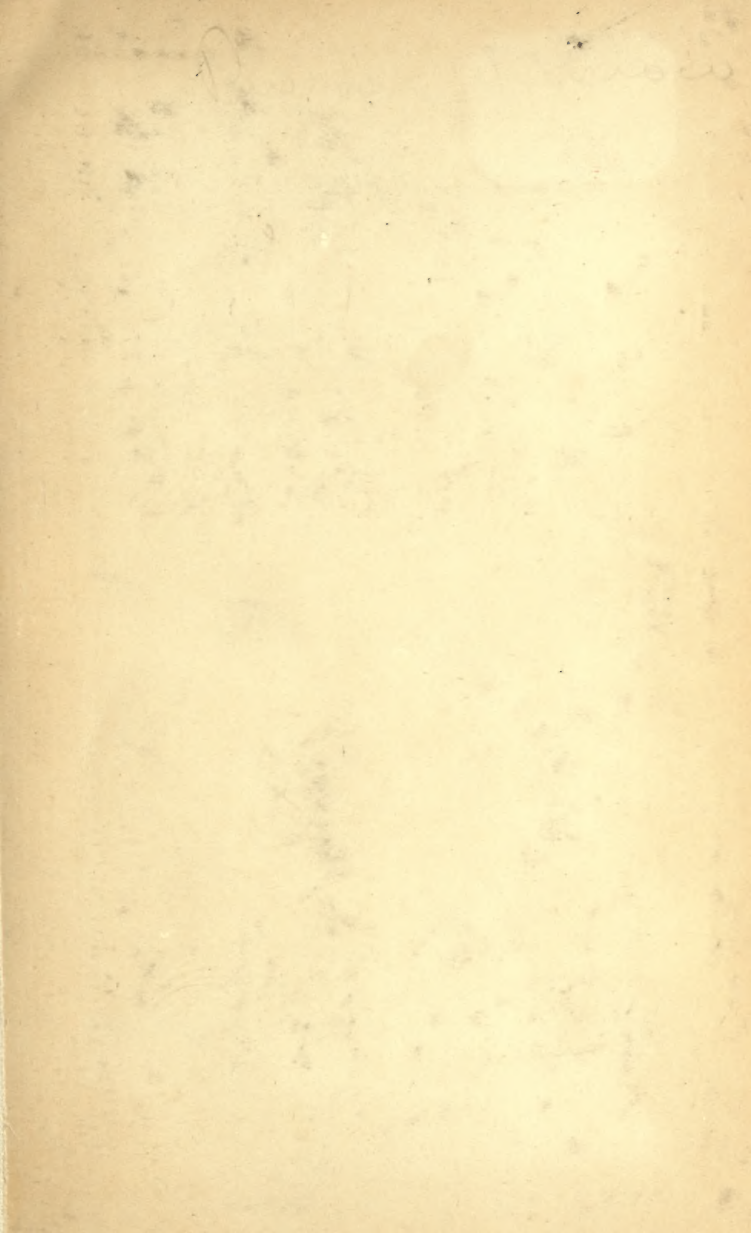
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THE GREAT SYMBOLS

BY

W. J. TOWNSEND, D.D.

London

CHARLES H. KELLY

2, CASTLE ST., CITY RD., AND 26, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

1901

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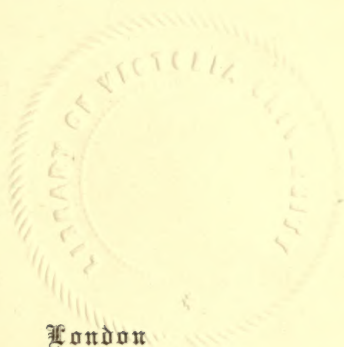
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November 1901.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE word Symbol is derived from the Greek *sumbolon* (from *sun-ballō*, I cast or throw together), and meant originally to cast together several portions so as to form a whole; *e.g.* a feast, towards which each person had contributed something to the common stock. Probably it was in this sense that the creeds of the early church came to be called symbols, because (according to Augustine) all the fundamental doctrines of Christianity were gathered in them, or from the tradition related by Rufinus that the so-called Apostle's Creed was formed by each of the apostles on the day of Pentecost contributing a sentence; Peter commencing: "I believe in God the Father," the others continuing, and so on to Matthias, who concluded, "the life everlasting. Amen." The word enlarged its scope in the progress of time so as to be applied to many things which in their outward appearance,

✓ or designated purpose, represented or signified higher things. The standards of military bodies were called by this name, and Christians applied it to rites, ceremonies, sacraments, and forms which had religious signification. In later times the name was given to crosses, images, and pictures used in worship.

The word will be used in a somewhat narrower sense in these chapters. The term Symbol has, by general consent, come to be applied to anything which becomes representative of something else. The meaning supplied by Coleridge sufficiently indicates the sense in which it is used in this volume: "A symbol is a sign included in the idea which it represents, *e.g.* an actual part chosen to represent the whole, or a lower form or species used as the representative of a higher in the same kind." In relation to the sacred Scriptures it is almost entirely a synonym of the word type (*tupos*, a figure), which is used by the apostles in this sense: "them that had not sinned after the *likeness* of Adam's transgression" (Rom. 5¹⁴). "Now these things happened by way of *example*" (margin, figure, 1 Cor. 10¹¹). "*Figures* which ye made to worship them" (Acts 7⁴³). "The *pattern* showed thee in the mount" (Heb. 8⁵).

The word *symbol* has displaced the word *type*

in German ecclesiastical literature, and as a term is more easily and generally understood. In adopting it here, it is of importance that its meaning and application should be perfectly clear; and that it may be so, some general principles must be borne in mind in relation to the wonderful system of symbols and figures embodied in the law and religion of the Jews.

The appointments and ceremonies of Judaism had a signification far above their intrinsic nature. They were indeed comparatively nothing in themselves; they were only of value for what they represented. The apostles speak of them as "A shadow of the heavenly things" (Heb. 8⁵), and "a shadow of good things to come" (Col. 2¹⁷). There is no substance in a shadow, but it indicates the substance and is inseparable from it. These symbols were not an end in themselves, but they were unspeakably valuable in what they signified and adumbrated; and in this they fulfilled the purpose of their appointment. They had vital relation to the great facts and truths of Christianity, and neither the connection between the Old and New Dispensations nor the rationale of the Divine method of revelation can be understood unless this relation is firmly grasped.

The Old Dispensation was established to

Symbols
form
Bible
unity

cultivate a true and healthy religious life among the Jews. It has been affirmed that the purpose of Judaism was mainly sanitary. It is true that the peculiar, and indeed unique, position of the Israelites on their emergence from a condition of degrading bondage in Egypt to the life of the wilderness, necessitated a national code which largely consisted of sanitary and economic regulations, but these were not the only or main purposes of its promulgation. Its chief purpose was to cultivate a healthful spirit of religion in the nation, the leaven of which might be diffused far and wide. Therefore the synagogue and the temple, the officiating priesthood, the sacrificial rites were established, and the oft-recurring services were appointed to be carried out with unfailing exactness.

It is quite certain that the forms and rites of Judaism were effectual in arousing spiritual susceptibility and promoting intense longings for divine realities in the minds of the old saints. It is impossible to conceive of earnest, devout souls going to the synagogue or temple, uniting in the worship, observing the rites of sacrifice, being face to face with symbolic persons, functions, ceremonies, and patterns, without having anxious cravings and intense curiosity aroused as to what these things meant and

whither they tended. It is certain that the great teachers and leaders of the Jewish people, the heroes of faith, rose above the symbols and grasped the substances and realities which they represented. Moses, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and many others show us by their writings how much they had gone beyond the external sign and penetrated to the hidden truth and the inward grace. This spiritual apprehension would not be limited to the great men of the nation. "The pure in heart shall see God," and we may well believe that even among the poor and lowly of the congregation there were many meek and earnest souls who rose on the wings of faith to divinest fellowships. If the fuller revelation given in Christ enables us to recognise unmistakably the trend and genius of Judaism, as they could not who lived under its shade, we must not conclude that they were in total ignorance of its rich significance. It is a truer view of them, to believe that by the aid of "that light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," many were enabled by simple faith and humble devoutness to enter into the heavenly places, by means of the patterns and symbols they had before their eyes. Those spiritual realities would assume greater definiteness and impart nobler joys as faith strengthened

itself and the inward eye was purged from earthly grossness. This was the result designed by God in appointing the strange and elaborate system of ritual which occupied so large a share in the Mosaic law.

It must be borne in mind that there have been from the beginning of revelation certain guiding principles and truths, the same all through, but which have been manifested in growing fulness up to the perfected gospel of the Lord Jesus. These had their beginnings in the root promise and prophecy given to our first parents in Paradise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. This indeed may be called the germ cell of future revelation. Subsequent epiphanies, announcements, and unfoldings were but the outgrowth of that plastic word. It involved much. The law of eternal righteousness, the infinite evil of sin, the inevitable penalties of sin, the appearance of a Redeemer and Deliverer, the rescue of the sinner from the guilt and power of evil and his restoration to happiness and holiness, all followed naturally as the fulfilment of the radiant promise. These great truths and facts were only known in rudimentary forms at first, but they never altered in their nature or purpose. Revealed in the fulness of time in all their glory by the Christ, they were

made known before "the due time" by symbols and figures, which were "shadows" and "patterns" of better things to come. The forms and conditions under which these truths have been conveyed have been various: "spoken unto the fathers by the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners," but the truths have never varied. Like the God of truth, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," they have been the same throughout the ages, made known by appointed messengers and by divinely chosen symbols with ever-growing emphasis, until they articulated themselves so distinctly to the hearts of the faithful, that some actually were waiting, upborne by the living hope, and could not die until they had seen the Lord's Christ. The writers of the undying literature of the Hebrew Church had extraordinary perception of these truths and gave expression to them in strains of rapturous exultation.

In accordance with these conclusions we find that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews uniformly represents Judaism as a preparatory and educational dispensation for the gospel of Christ. But to be this, the institutions, functions, services, and figures of the law must have been suffused with the spirit of Christ and all that belonged to His redeeming work. If such a

according to man's faith God revealed more of the purpose of the symbols - symbols began to be taken from God's side

preparatory economy was made use of by God to introduce Christianity to the world, it must have been because mankind were not sufficiently advanced in religious perception to receive at once the fuller revelation. The world was then in its childhood. When we begin to teach our children we do it by showing them pictures. These arouse attention, excite curiosity, lead to inquiry, create the craving for knowledge. It was so as to the youth of the world. God gave it a picture book; the pictures were carefully drawn, they were "patterns of the heavenly things," they were framed after "the pattern shown in the mount," and they marvellously answered their purpose.

In considering the symbols appointed by God in the dispensation of Judaism there must be caution exercised in discriminating between what is properly symbolic and what is merely personal or historic. There have been extravagances in the interpretation of Scripture of a grotesque character, and fancy has run riot in reckoning as symbolic, personages and events which were never appointed as such by God. Abraham offering up his son Isaac has been treated as representative of God giving His Son for the sin of the world; Moses spreading forth his arms in prayer has been reckoned to symbolise Christ

*for the world - and here
This personification of symbols becomes*

with His arms outstretched upon the Cross; the brazen serpent has often been supposed to typify the death of Calvary; and the scarlet robe of Rahab has been said to signify the blood of Christ. Such a method of explaining Scripture exposes hermeneutics to contempt. It is needful, therefore, to distinguish between real symbols and mere accidental resemblances, comparisons, and analogies, otherwise we may be involved in absurdities. A few simple rules will guide our judgement in determining the nature and use of a true symbol.

(a) A symbol of divine truth must be pure in its nature. The habit of some old divines of representing Jacob receiving the blessing of Isaac, clothed in the garments of Esau, as typical of the believer receiving the grace of God arrayed in the garments of Christ's righteousness, was an outrage on moral propriety. As the symbol was intended to represent moral lessons and divine truth, it must needs be right in its own nature.

(b) The symbol must not be judged so much by a mere accidental resemblance of the thing signified, as by its suggestive quality and its associative capacity. Mere objective likeness is of little account; the imperative element in the symbol is, that it has the power to suggest the

thing symbolised to the receptive and responsive mind. The symbols of the Bible had relation to the future and not to the past; they were intended to help the world in its upward struggle to unseen realities.

(c) The symbols of the Mosaic law were of Divine arrangement and appointment. Only He who conceived and ordained the process of revelation could arrange beforehand the correlations between symbol and substance, between type and anti-type.

(d) The symbol can only properly set forth or signify such truths and ideas as are pre-arranged for it to represent. To press it for further service is an abuse of its function and purpose.

(e) The name of a symbol should be carefully weighed and its true meaning ascertained. The key to its teaching may sometimes be thus more easily ascertained.

(f) Each symbol should be considered to represent mainly one idea. Subordinate ideas may cluster round the main one, but they may belong rather to the leading idea than to the symbol. There were several truths connected with the great principle of Sacrifice, but to enforce the great truth itself was the chief purpose of the symbol used.

(g) The fundamental meaning of a symbol must be considered apart from mere accessories or accidents. The act of purification might have reference to a man, an animal, or an article of furniture; but the symbol stood for purity, no matter what was the subject of the cleansing process. So, as to the Golden Candlestick. Snuffers and snuffer-trays were commanded to be provided with it, but the symbol meant light, and the Candlestick itself stood for the idea.

(h) One thing more should be remembered. A person or a material could not become symbolic. Aaron, as a man, was not a symbol, but his function as the High Priest was. The office was symbolic and not the man. So, as to the fine gold used in making the Candlestick, the figures of the Cherubim, and other ornaments of the House. The material was not symbolic, but the ornament appointed was. Thus it was moral quality, official position, and significance of form which made the symbol, and not the individual or the material.

To sum up the matter. The symbols of the Old Dispensation exhibited or represented in an inferior or initial manner, truths, principles, ideas, and laws which were to be revealed in a fuller measure in the New Dispensation of the Son of God. They were forerunners of that which

was greater than themselves, and were intended to prepare the way for it. They were also vouchers by God's appointment that what was promised to mankind in relation to redemption should surely come to pass. As "shadows" they were projected by the coming substances or events, and both announced their coming, indicated their essential nature, and were the pledges of their advent in due time. Their general office was to announce facts and truths which were yet hidden but which would be manifested in the providential developments of the future. They were indeed another form of prophecy. They were both indications and assurances of better things which were to be revealed; and in their highest result they enabled the meek and docile saint of the old world to grow to the stature of a noble man, and to take a lofty outlook upon the unity and sweep of the Divine purposes.

CHAPTER II
THE SANCTUARY

CHAPTER II

THE SANCTUARY

A SYSTEM of religion which was essentially symbolic in its nature and ritualistic in its observance, required, both for the fulfilment of its leading purpose and the practice of its ceremonial, many carefully adjusted arrangements and appointments. Of these either a sacred locality or a definitely consecrated building was the first essential. It was indispensable as a shrine of the Deity who was to be worshipped, as the depository of the symbols which were to be employed, as the theatre where the rites and observances could be adequately administered. Hence the sanctuary was erected in the wilderness of Sinai. This not only contained the symbols, of which it is the purpose of these papers to treat, but was itself symbolical in a remarkable degree.

A detailed account of the structure need only be attempted here so far as it is needful to elucidate its representative character.

The sanctuary, as a whole, was of considerable dimensions and was divided into three parts. The first of these was the court, which was one hundred and fifty feet long by twenty-five broad. It stood open to the sky, and was formed by sixty pillars on which curtains were suspended. These pillars were of close-grained and incorruptible acacia wood, standing seven and a half feet high and fitting into sockets of brass. The curtains were of "fine linen," a fabric woven out of twisted yarn called *shesh*. The entrance to the court was in the centre of the east end, formed by five pillars on which were hung curtains dyed blue, purple, and scarlet, carefully embroidered, and measuring thirty feet in width. In this court were placed the laver, or large basin for washing, and the altar of burnt offering.

Within the court stood the tabernacle or sanctuary proper, to which various names are applied. This was distinguished from the court by being entirely enclosed. The walls were formed of beams of acacia wood placed close to each other. They were overlaid with gold on both sides, and stood fifteen feet high and two feet three inches broad. In the foot of each beam were two tenons which were inserted in silver sockets, each socket weighing ninety-three pounds twelve ounces avoirdupois. The silver

was obtained from the "atonement money" paid by the men of Israel for the ransom of their souls, and amounted to one hundred talents. A talent of silver was equal to three thousand shekels, and the value of the silver used for this purpose may be computed at forty thousand pounds sterling. How those beams had to be coupled or braced together may be found described in the Book of Exodus, or in the excellent article of Mr. Ferguson in Smith's *Dictionary of the Bible*. This wooden enclosure became "a dwelling-place" by having curtains thrown over it which hung over all the sides except the front, and formed a roof of a substantial kind. Ten curtains were prepared, each of them forty-two feet long and six feet wide. These were joined together in two parts. Thus two enormous masses of material were formed, each being forty-two feet long by thirty feet broad. These again had loops, or "eyes," wrought in the selvedge. Then fifty golden "taches," probably like the letter S in shape, were put into the loops, and the two pieces became one. The whole was then thrown lengthwise across the walls so that the coupling of golden taches fell exactly on the dividing line of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, which will be presently referred to. This vast curtain was woven of fine twined linen

(*shesh*), dyed blue, purple, and scarlet, figures of the cherubim being interwoven with the fabric. Over this curtain another of goat's hair was thrown; over that was one of ram's skins dyed red; and lastly, above that was one of dolphin skins. Thus sufficient provision was made against the inroads of severe and stormy weather.

The entrance to the tabernacle was from the east, and was formed by the erection of four pillars of acacia wood covered with gold, set in sockets of brass, with hooks of gold inserted in the tops, from which a richly embroidered curtain of blue, purple, and scarlet colours was hung. The building was divided into two compartments: the Holy Place, measuring thirty feet long by fifteen broad; and the Holy of Holies, measuring fifteen feet each way. The Holiest was shrouded from the rest of the building by a veil of finely woven linen, dyed blue, purple, and scarlet, and embroidered with figures of the cherubim. It was hung by hooks of gold, which were sunken into sockets of silver, on four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold. The furniture and appointments of these two apartments will be noticed below.

The names by which the sanctuary was called were threefold: (*a*) The Dwelling-Place (*hammishkān*), rendered in the Authorised and

Revised Version as Tabernacle, although in the margin of the Revised Version it is rendered Dwelling. The frequent use of the word indicates that God "dwelt" as really in the tabernacle as men in their houses, and that the house of God was not only in the midst of Israel, but that the Master of the house was not an absentee, but a real presence. (b) The Meeting-Place (*óhel mo" ed*), translated in the Authorised Version "Tabernacle of the Congregation," and in the Revised Version, "Tent of Meeting." It was called also the "Tent of Testimony" (*ohel eduth*). The expression "Tent of Meeting" does not signify the meeting-place of the congregation, but where God and the congregation met together in worship and fellowship. "At the door of the tent of meeting before the Lord; where I will meet with you to speak there unto you, and there I will meet with the children of Israel, and the tent shall be sanctified with My glory" (Ex. 29^{42, 43}). (c) Sanctuary (*migdash, godesh*), signifying a place set apart and sanctified for a holy purpose. "He shall not go in . . . because he hath a blemish, that he profane not My sanctuaries, for I am the Lord which sanctify them" (Lev. 21²³).

These names are fully explanatory of the

meaning of the tabernacle, and express the great facts and truths it was intended to embody or symbolise.

The primary fact represented by the sanctuary was that it was the Shrine of the Divine Glory. There in the Holy of Holies shone the lustrous symbol of the Divine Presence, called in religious phrase "the Shekinah," or "Inhabiting Presence." The passage, "In the midst whereof I dwell" (Num. 5³), is rendered by the Targum of Onkelos, "among whom My Shekinah is dwelling." Thus the building was essentially the centre of the national life. It was the seat of the Theocracy. There God reigned, there the national homage and service were rendered, there the Divine counsels were given, commands issued, judgements fulminated, and manifestoes sent forth. All the social and political life of the people was regulated and controlled by it and from it, all the public functionaries were appointed and held office in connection with it, and especially the duties of the High Priest therein as the direct representative of God on earth, were of a most important and significant character.

Thus the tabernacle, and in after generations the temple, was an answer to the solemn question, a question craving answer from the

whole human family, although not always expressed with equal distinctness of articulation: "But will God in very deed dwell upon the earth?" It was a clear answer in the affirmative; not a completed answer, but unmistakable, so far as it went, and suggestive of much more than was yet given.

Clustering round this great and primary truth involved in the institution of the tabernacle were others scarcely less important, and which were clearly indicated and symbolised by the building and the functions discharged in it. Only some of these can be noticed here. (a) The abiding presence of God with the Church. "Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them" (Ex. 25⁸). This fact was fully and unmistakably announced by Christ in the midst of His followers when He was leaving the world: "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world" (Matt. 28²⁰). The sanctuary with its Shining Presence in the Holy of Holies was a continual reminder of this truth; it was a token which could not be mistaken of tender care, of fatherly solicitude, and of unchanging love. Its effect on the minds of the people was undoubtedly very great. There were dull, gross, and unresponsive minds in the congregation, but there were as surely

many who entered into the teachings of the sanctuary with keen susceptibility of spiritual truth. This fact comes out many times in the old literature of the nation. The Psalms and the prophecies are full of references to this inspiring fact. When the saints called upon God to manifest His power, they cried: "Thou who sittest upon the cherubim, shine forth . . . and come to save us" (Ps. 80¹⁻²). When God would cheer His people, He said: "I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain" (Joel 3¹⁷). The sanctuary, whether the tabernacle in the wilderness or the temple in Jerusalem, was God's palace and home. He dwelt with His people, He who inhabited eternity and whose throne is on high was also near His people, waiting to receive their adoring worship and to give them His benediction, giving them opportunity for intercourse, and, by many symbols and services, educating them for true abiding communion with Himself.

(b) The tabernacle symbolised the line of demarcation which God has drawn between the Church and the world. The sanctuary, as a whole, taught the great truth that there is a radical separation between the faithful and the ungodly. The outer court, the Holy Place, the Holy of Holies, as an ascending gradation in the

apartments of the sanctuary, emphasised the same lesson. God was crying: "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate" (2 Cor. 6¹⁷), and the silent, continual witness was not ineffectual. The leader of Israel recognised the solemn lesson and responded: "For wherein now shall it be known that I have found grace in Thy sight, I and Thy people? Is it not that Thou goest with us? so that we be separated, I and Thy people, from all the people that are on the face of the earth" (Ex. 33¹⁶).

(c) But not separated only. They were to be holy. The tabernacle stood for holiness. The lavers, lustrations, sacrifices, purifications, veils, all meant and taught holiness. This was the final cause of Judaism, as it is of Christianity. "I am the Lord, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt to be your God; ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11⁴⁵). "To the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before our God and Father" (1 Thess. 3¹³).

(d) As the foundation of all intercourse between God and man, and as the means whereby holiness is attainable, the idea of atonement entered into the very conception and structure of the tabernacle. It was a significant circumstance that the hundred talents of silver

paid by the men of Israel for the ransom of their persons were formed into one hundred sockets for the foundation of the sanctuary. This house of God was literally built on atonement money. "Thou shalt take the atonement money from the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tent of meeting" (Ex. 30¹⁶). "And the hundred talents of silver were for casting the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the veil; an hundred sockets for the hundred talents, a talent for a socket" (Ex. 38²⁷).

So it was throughout the tabernacle institution and dispensation. Atonement was the essential and dominant idea as a means to the final end, from the silver paid as ransom money to the sprinkling of the blood of the victim in the Holy of Holies on the day of atonement. Other spiritual truths and ideas interwoven with the structure and arrangements of the sanctuary will be noticed below.

The partial view here given of the tabernacle as a shrine of the Deity and a meeting-place between God and man will explain several curious facts in its construction and history. The whole sanctuary, even in smallest details, purports to be designed and ordered by God Himself. He gave commandment concerning

not only the great symbols, but as to measurements, planks, curtains, hooks, sockets, tenons, loops, and taches. He described the decorations of the candlestick and the veil, the altars, and the Ark. He spoke of tongs, snuffers, and spoons. Is this like God? Is it not mere trifling for the Lord of Infinite Majesty to think of such details? Does it not belittle our idea of His dignity? No; no more than the dust He scatters on the butterfly's wing, or the perfect organisation He gives to an imperceptible insect, degrades Him in our estimation. Are we not struck dumb with admiration when we study the careful detail He has lavished upon the infinitely little in the material universe, and should we not be equally impressed with the same exactness in the arrangements of the moral universe, and especially in His mission of eternal love to retrieve the fall and shame of humanity? It was because the tabernacle and all that belonged to it was to be a standing witness for the deepest truths of religion, and to symbolise the redeeming work of Christ, that it was to be constructed after a Divine ideal and all was to be conformed to that standard. "See that thou make them after their pattern, which hath been showed thee in the mount" (Ex. 25⁴⁰).

This consideration gives the explanation of the valuable materials used in the erection and decoration of the sanctuary, and the infinite labour bestowed upon it. Nothing was to be of inferior quality, nothing was to be done with a careless hand or in an indifferent spirit. Although it was only to serve a temporary purpose, the most skilled workmen and the greatest artists of the nation must be employed, and the most rare and precious materials must be lavished upon it so that "strength and beauty might be in His sanctuary." The wealth expended in the construction and decoration of the house was enormous. Of gold forty-four thousand ounces, which, at a moderate computation, must have been worth £185,000; of silver one hundred and fifty thousand ounces, in value £41,000; of brass or copper one hundred and six thousand ounces, equal to £330; for other materials, especially precious stones and workmanship, reckon £50,000; making in round numbers a sum of nearly £300,000 which this small "tent of meeting" cost the people.

How much more it would have cost if the people had had their way it is impossible to say. Their enthusiasm was wrought up to the highest pitch, and they brought many more offerings than could be appropriated in the

building. Then Moses issued a proclamation : " Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much " (Ex. 36⁶. 7). Why was this lavish liberality, this elaborate ornamentation, this skilled and devout labour permitted and even commanded ? The reason undoubtedly was twofold. The best, and only the best, should be offered to God, and nothing is too precious or expensive to present in His service that will do Him honour or will magnify His Name. It must also be remembered that what is presented to God must involve sacrifice as the proof of love and the sign of devotion. To give to Him what costs us nothing is the offering of sloth and selfishness, but to give at great cost, or in severe deprivation, is to testify worthily of a supreme and Christlike love. The eloquent words of a modern religious prophet on this point are worthy of being engraved in letters of gold : " Was the glory of the tabernacle necessary to set forth or image His divine glory to the minds of His people ? What ? purple or scarlet necessary to the people who had seen the great river of Egypt run scarlet to the sea under His condemnation ?

What? golden lamp and cherub necessary for those who had seen the fires of heaven falling like a mantle on Mount Sinai, and its golden courts opened to receive their mortal lawgiver? What? silver clasp and fillet necessary when they had seen the silver waves of the Red Sea clasp in their arched hollows the corpses of the horse and his rider? Nay, not so. There was but one reason, and that an eternal one; that as the covenant that He made with men was accompanied with some external sign of its continuance, and of His remembrance of it, so the acceptance of that covenant might be marked and signified by men in some external sign of their love and obedience and surrender of themselves and theirs to His will; and that their gratitude to Him, and continual remembrance of Him, might have at once their expression and their enduring testimony in the presentation to Him, not only of the firstlings of the herd and fold, not only of the fruits of the earth and the tithe of time, but of all treasures of wisdom and beauty, of the thought that invents and the hand that labours, of wealth of wood and weight of stone, of the strength of iron and the light of gold.”¹

¹ Ruskin's *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, p. 15, Edition 1883.

CHAPTER III

THE ARK OF GOD

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IN the Mosaic system there was a unique position and importance attached to the Ark. It was regarded as the very centre of the national life, as though the hopes and destinies of the people were intertwined with it. The most precious national relics were placed in it, the most solemn and mysterious religious rites were performed before it, and the glorious Shekinah of Jehovah shone over and around it.

It was a profoundly curious arrangement, and gives rise to many questions. The secrecy of the sacred rites in connection with it, the shrouding of it from common gaze save upon great public occasions, the supernatural influences which attended it, all suggest anxious thoughts. The worship of the old patriarchs would seem to have been of a wonderfully free and spiritual character. They held high communion with God as they looked up into the beaming sky at

morn or as they walked under the firmament lit up with glittering stars at night. Men like Noah, Enoch, Abraham, had no tabernacle, but offered their sacrifices on the mountain top. There seems to have been both loftiness and elasticity in the fervent aspirations of these early saints.

Then we pass to the tabernacle with its courts and chambers, with the Holy of Holies as the consecrated central apartment wherein was to be deposited the Ark and its contents. Was this progress? Was it a movement towards light, expansiveness, perfection? Was it not rather a down grade and a backward movement? To come to a house with symbols and ceremonies, instead of the expanse of nature, the open sky, and the beating aspiration of the spirit, was a startling change which may well arrest our thoughts.

Of course God meant the liberation and expansion of man's nature and being, the deliverance of his thoughts, desires, and hopes from shame and error, the widening of his horizon into infinitudes of bliss. Therefore implicit faith in God's rectitude and wisdom is the first step towards ascertaining the rationale of His procedure. Two important points must be noted here—

(a) To attain ultimately to that high and perfect communion with God which needs no locality for worship, no altar for sacrifice, and no official medium of approach to Him, man had to begin by having the sacred locality, the altar for sacrifice, and the consecrated medium. God was not, in the case now being considered, dealing with Abrahams and Melchizedeks, but with a nation, with masses of people to be numbered by millions, and eventually with the whole race of man. Nor was this all. These people were not like Abraham, with a keen spiritual vision and a responsively religious nature. They were sodden in ignorance, having lost even their desire for freedom and the elements of their traditional faith. Therefore God had to build from the bottom. Man must be taught that God is *somewhere* before he can rise to realise that He is everywhere. Vague generalities about God are not helpful either to an earnest spirit or to a pleasure-loving nation. To exchange the great truths, "God is light" and "God is love," for "Immensities" and "Silences," for "Infinitudes" and "Eternities," is not stepping forward but backward! To abolish the "Father" for the "Absolute" and the "Unknowable," means irretrievable loss and ruin to humanity. To exchange the "Indwelling Presence" for a

"Stream of Tendency," is to give up bread and to take a stone, to crave for a fish and receive a serpent. There was more to enlighten and expand the souls of men in the Jewish sanctuary services and teachings than in all the nature worship of Egypt. There has been infinitely more light and truth from the manger of Bethlehem and the Cross of Golgotha than from all the yearnings of old pagan teachers, however wistful, or from all the religions of Oriental lands, however philosophic.

(b) Man could only be elevated and perfected by being purified. As sin was the root cause of his shame and misery, the cause must be eradicated before the cure could be effected. Only, "if the root be holy so are the branches." And therefore not only sin must be forgiven and removed, but its pollution must be purged, its penalties obviated, its consequences overcome. Judaism was the first and the only one of the old-world religions to grapple intelligently and efficiently with this awful problem. The prophets of the old faiths of paganism could cast no light upon it; therefore they evaded it. They excluded it from their calculation. Neither the Avesta nor the Vedic hymns recognise it. They speak of endless transmigrations by which man may escape from certain frailties and

limitations, but they do not grapple with the terrible reality of sin. Buddhism ignores its very existence by its pure fatalism, and if we gather up the teaching of the rival faiths from Parsism to Mohammedanism, so far as they deal with sin at all, the only counsel given to the sinner is, "Man, heal thyself." Herein lies the failure of these old religions. In their solution of this problem lies the success of Judaism and Christianity. These provided for the cleansing of the heart from sin and the entire sanctification of man's nature. Thus happiness, spiritual freedom, eternal life were placed within the reach of men.

Towards the attainment of this end God fixed a definite place where His glory should be manifested and towards which the people might be drawn. For this purpose He commanded the construction of an object that might be a symbol of His presence and His most endearing attributes.

It was a simple arrangement: the making of a box or chest of acacia wood, about four feet long by two and a half feet broad and high. Along the upper edge ran a carved crown or border of gold. At the foot of the chest at each end there was a ring placed, through which poles could be placed by which the Ark could

be transported from place to place. The whole was covered with gold both inside and out.

A covering of solid gold was commanded to be prepared and placed upon the Ark, and upon this covering, called the Mercy Seat, were placed two cherubim, made of "beaten gold," having their wings outspread and their faces bowed towards the Mercy Seat. This chest was called by several names. In the earlier books of the Law it is called the "Ark of the Testimony," in Deuteronomy and Joshua it is generally called the "Ark of the Covenant," but in later days it was most frequently known as the "Ark of God." The specific fitness of these names will appear farther on.

The Ark became a depository for the tables of stone on which were engraved the ten great words of the moral law. Those words were the miracle of antiquity. Amidst the licentious excesses of Egyptian worship, the degrading rites of Moloch, Baal, and Astarte, this code of moral duty stands in lofty, severe, isolated grandeur, "a pure and perfect chrysolite." Nothing can be added to it, nothing can be taken from it. It covers the whole ground of moral duty. Of necessity it was mainly negative in its form, because the universal course

of sin had to be met primarily by a clear, strong, unmistakable declaration against it. But it is positive both in aim and spirit, and he who conforms to its precepts must inevitably become a changed and transfigured character. That code was the reflection of the Eternal Righteousness; it spoke the mind of God on all human duty and action; it was a standing and impressive witness against human sin; it set up an infallible standard of excellence, to which every man was called upon to conform.

It was as containing these tables of the law that this chest was the "Ark of the Testimony." The law of God was called "the Testimony" frequently by the prophets and psalmists of the old faith. The 119th Psalm is timed throughout to the refrain of David: "Thy testimonies are my delight and my counsellors; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb."

The tables of the moral law formed also the basis of God's covenant with His people. It was on the express condition that they revered and obeyed these laws that God assured them of the land of Canaan and became their King and Protector. In the general assembly of Israel the laws were read by Moses, the covenant was expounded, and the whole people answered:

"All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." Thus the Ark came to be called the "Ark of the Covenant."

The significance of the Ark is far from being exhausted. The golden covering called the Mercy Seat presents another view of its purpose. This covering is designated, both in the Authorised and Revised Versions, by the word *kapporeth*, which is derived from *kārphar*, to cover; but a special meaning is evidently attached to this expression. There are many words and forms of words used in the Old Testament to express the idea of covering, but only once is this word used in a common relation. This occurs in Gen. 6¹⁴, "And thou shalt pitch it within and without with pitch." But in more than seventy places it is used in the sense of covering sin, making propitiation or reconciliation, *e.g.* Ex. 30¹⁰, "And Aaron shall make atonement upon the horns of it once in the year, with the blood of the sin offering of atonement once in the year shall he make atonement," etc.

Several noteworthy critics insist that the word *kapporeth* should be regarded simply in the ordinary sense of cover, but there are several urgent reasons otherwise, which forbid the hasty surrender of an interpretation which has come down from hoar antiquity, commended by many

erudite expositors, and which deeply affects the character of the Jewish ritual.

The Mercy Seat is never spoken of as a part of the Ark, but as a distinct and separate thing; as much so as were the cherubim which stood upon the Mercy Seat. Thus after full instructions had been given as to the construction of the Ark itself, it was commanded, "And thou shalt make a Mercy Seat of pure gold. . . . And thou shalt make two cherubim of gold. . . . And thou shalt put the Mercy Seat above upon the Ark, and in the Ark thou shalt put the testimony that I will give thee" (Ex. 25¹⁷. 18. 21). This distinctiveness of character is emphasised in many passages, *e.g.* "Speak unto Aaron, thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil, before the Mercy Seat which is upon the Ark" (Lev. 16²). Such references seem to indicate that the *kapporeth* was not a mere lid, but had a special purpose and relation of its own.

The constant coupling of the Mercy Seat with the idea of Atonement is a significant fact. On the great Day of Atonement Aaron had to take the golden censer, full of incense, "that the cloud of the incense may cover the Mercy Seat"; he had to take the blood of the bullock, "and before the Mercy Seat he shall sprinkle

of the blood with his finger seven times"; then he had to take the blood of the goat, "and sprinkle it upon the Mercy Seat and before the Mercy Seat" (Lev. 16¹³⁻¹⁵). Thus the most solemn and portentous of all the services on this greatest day of the year were in the closest relation to this remarkable covering.

The general strain of Jewish tradition traces the derivation of *kapporeth* from *kipper*, which, as used in the Bible, never means anything but to atone or appease. In the Septuagint version the word is translated *hilasterion epithēma*, a propitiatory covering. Philo refers to the Mercy Seat in the same terms, adding, "it was a symbol of the power of God." Quite authoritative, however, is the use of the term by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (chap. 9⁵), "overshadowing the Mercy Seat" (*hilasterion*), while in the margin occurs the word "propitiatory." The same word is used by Paul, Rom. 3²⁵, "to be a propitiation through faith in His blood."

One more proof of the unique importance attached to this covering is found in the fact that it gave its name to the Holy of Holies as though it was the most precious thing there. "The House of the Mercy Seat" (1 Chron. 28¹¹).

If, therefore, as containing the tables of the law, the Ark was a symbol of God's eternal

righteousness, so also as bearing on its crown the Mercy Seat it symbolised His infinite mercy. Here "mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

The Ark above all was the shrine of the Divine Glory. The visible flame of the presence of Jehovah hovered over and around it. "And when Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with Him, then he heard the Voice speaking unto him from above the Mercy Seat, which was upon the Ark of the Testimony from between the two cherubim" (Num. 7⁸⁹). "Thou that dwellest between the cherubim shine forth" (Ps. 80¹). The luminous cloud which filled the Holiest was called by the Jews "the *Sheki'nah*," which signifies "Indwelling." The word does not occur in the Bible, but in the Targum of Onkelos Num. 5³ is rendered: "Among whom my *Sheki'nah* is dwelling." This mysterious brightness added to the unutterable sanctity with which the Ark became invested to the people. Signs and wonders attended it wherever it went. It was an object of such sacred interest that when brought from the Holiest it had to be covered from common gaze. None could touch or approach it but those divinely authorised. Uzzah touched it to save it from falling, and death fell upon him. The

Philistines tried to convey it by unsanctified hands, but the plague consumed them. In the temple of the heathen, the idol deities were prostrated and degraded before it. The walls of Jericho fell down before it, and the waters of Jordan stayed their flow when it was placed in the bed of the stream. Thus it was an Ark of Power. Through it the Divine Majesty and Dominion were vindicated.

On the other hand, the most fragrant airs of heaven and the softest dews of mercy seemed to play about it. It was the centre of joy and strength to the nation; the songs and thanksgivings of the people were uttered around it; victories were won through its influence, and when it went into the house of Obbededom the Gittite, and was harboured there for three months, "the Lord blessed Obbededom and all his house." The choicest blessing given to a Jew was the gift of sons, and eight of them were bestowed upon the man who had received into his house the blessed Ark. Because of these abundant wonders the Ark was called the "Ark of God." It was at once His residence on earth and the instrument of His Will.

So far as can be ascertained, nothing but the Tables of the Law were placed in the Ark as first arranged. But even before its construction

Aaron had been commanded: "Take a pot and put an omer of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord to be kept for your generations" (Ex. 16³³). This probably had been deposited before the Ark in the Holiest, but judging from Heb. 9⁵ it must eventually have been placed within the Ark for safety. So also it must have been with Aaron's rod that budded, thereby vindicating the priestly orders of Aaron and his house. God commanded: "Put back the rod of Aaron *before* the testimony," Num. 17¹⁰, but it also found a resting-place within the Ark. In still later days the Book of the Law, the full code of Jewish ritual, was placed within the Ark, thus making it in a double sense the "Ark of Testimony." The Golden Cherubim must form the subject of a subsequent chapter.

Many of our older theologians, among whom may be cited Dr. John Lightfoot, the Talmudist, and some of our most spiritual modern expositors, have taught that the Ark symbolised the nature and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not wise to seek for symbolisms in every arrangement and appointment of the Jewish ritual, but there are striking resemblances and correspondences between the Ark and the Lord Jesus, which are instructive if they do not fully justify the assumption of these writers. As the Ark

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Symbolism

was the centre of the Jewish system, so is Christ of the gospel dispensation; as the Glory of the Lord shone over and round the Ark, how much more in Christ in whom dwelt "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily!" As the Ark in containing the moral law was at once the witness for God's righteousness and against human sin, so Christ was the measure and standard of righteousness both human and divine. "To this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth" (John 18³⁷). In Him the law was drawn out in living characters and in perfect spirituality. The Ark, as bearing the Mercy Seat or Propitiatory, spoke of mercy, pardon, and salvation, but Christ is the true and abiding Propitiatory. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4¹⁰). The Ark shot forth thunders and lightnings of Divine wrath; Christ withered the fig tree, denounced and cast out devils, exposed hypocrisy, drove out the traffickers. The Ark breathed out peace and protection; Christ said, "I will give you rest," "My peace I give unto you," "Ye shall never perish." The Ark diffused its influence continuously; Christ said, "The water I shall give you shall be in you a well springing up into everlasting life." The

Ark by its very presence was a pledge of national prosperity to the Jews; Christ says to His Church, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." The Ark stood in the Holy of Holies; Christ "has sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," "there to appear in the presence of God for us." Two views are given by the Exile of Patmos of the central glory of heaven: "And I saw in the midst of the throne a Lamb standing as though it had been slain" (Rev. 5⁶); "And there was opened the temple of God, that is in heaven; and there was seen in His temple the Ark of His Covenant" (Rev. 11¹⁹).

Some symbols point
directly to his death
others are things
in the A.T. Law
as a result of
his death

CHAPTER IV
THE CHERUBIM OF GLORY

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THE CHERUBIM OF GLORY

THE meaning of the word Cherub, plural Cherubim, is very obscure. It may be said to be matter of pure conjecture. Various, and some of them grotesque, explanations of it have been suggested, but whichever is adopted there will still be great uncertainty as to its correctness. Philo and the early church Fathers agreed with each other that the word meant "much knowledge," and hence by many expositors the cherubim are called "the knowing ones." The Talmudists said the term signified children, because the cherubim had the faces of children, although how this was ascertained is not explained. Some Oriental scholars derive the word from *cherab*, to plough, because they thought Ezekiel taught that the form of an ox was predominant in the cherubim. Others claim that it comes from *kerob*, near, because these mysterious beings were in close proximity

to the Divine Throne. Gesenius affirms that it comes from *charab*, to shut out or to consecrate, because the cherubim were devoted so thoroughly to the service of God. To attempt to adjudicate among these and many other conjectures would be a weary and unprofitable task. It will be more helpful to compare the leading statements of the Scriptures concerning the cherubim, and from these deduce what they were and what they symbolised.

When our first parents were expelled from the Garden of Eden God appointed cherubim with a revolving sword of fire to guard the approach to the tree of life.

When the Ark of the Covenant was constructed two cherubim of beaten gold were placed upon the Mercy Seat, with wings outstretched and faces bowed in adoration.

When the veil of finely woven linen of blue and purple and scarlet dyes was hung before the Holy of Holies, figures of the cherubim were to be carefully embroidered thereon.

When Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, figures of the cherubim, of great size and beauty, were placed in the attitude of adoring worship in the Holiest Place, and representations of them were placed on the veil and on the walls of the temple.

When Isaiah beheld the glory of the Lord in His temple he saw six seraphim, creatures which correspond to the cherubim, who cried to each other in antiphonal strain, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory."

When Ezekiel was a captive in the land of Chaldea, he beheld in vision the glory of the Lord and four cherubim of marvellous appearance and attributes attending the Divine Majesty. Also when the same prophet saw the glory of the Lord departing from the temple, the cherubim spread out their wings, and mounting aloft, hovered over the vanishing glory.

When the Apostle John beheld in Patmos the interior of the courts of heaven, he saw "in the midst and round about" the throne "four living creatures" which exactly correspond to the cherubim of the Old Testament, and which in the Authorised Version are repulsively miscalled "beasts." These offered unresting praise to the Eternal King, crying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God the Almighty, which was and which is and which is to come" (Rev. 4⁸).

These are the principal references to these wondrous beings in the Bible, and will be found sufficient for present purposes.

It will have been observed by our readers that in the above references to the cherubim there is no complete or detailed description given, but there are some qualities common to them in every manifestation.

In the first mention of them (Gen. 3²⁴) no hint of their appearance is given, from which it may be inferred that there was some idea of the form of the cherubim already existing in the minds of the Israelites when the Pentateuch was written. In this passage they are only mentioned in connection with "the flame of a sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life."

When Moses was commanded to place them upon the Mercy Seat in the Holy of Holies the only particular description given concerning them was, that they had faces and wings. Their faces were to be bent towards the Mercy Seat and their wings outstretched towards each other (Ex. 25²⁰).

When Isaiah beheld them ministering before the Lord in His temple he describes them as each having six wings: "With twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly." They also united their voices in an anthem of lofty devotion and spoke the Divine message to the prophet (Isa. 6²⁻³).

The cherubim which Ezekiel saw beneath the throne of the Almighty are described as each having four faces and four wings and being full of eyes before and behind. Those he saw carved upon the walls of the figurative temple had only two faces each. The description given of the former is very elaborate. They spread their four wings and flew with such a sweep that the noise of their flying reached the outer court of the temple; they had feet like a calf, or, as it may here be understood, like an ox, which sparkled like burnished brass. They had "the likeness of a man" and the hands of a man. Their presence blazed and flashed exceedingly, they ran to and fro like lightning. Their four faces differed, one being that of a man, one that of a lion, one that of an eagle, and the other that of an ox. The two faces of the cherubim seen by the prophet in the later vision were those of a man and a lion (Ezek. 1⁵⁻¹⁰, 10⁸⁻¹⁴).

In the vision of John in the Apocalypse, the cherubim, or "living creatures," appeared with a distinct personality, each one having a different face, and being full of eyes before and behind. The first had the face of a lion, the second that of a calf or ox, the third that of a man, and the fourth that of a flying eagle (Rev. 4⁶⁻⁸).

In comparing these various statements with each other we find that there were certain characteristic features which distinguished the cherubim whenever they were seen. They were composite beings having the qualities or attributes of several creatures, viz. the man, the lion, the ox, and the eagle. This is clearly brought out by the prophet Ezekiel and the Apostle John. In most cases they are seen in the Divine temple and in close association with the throne of God. It can scarcely be doubted but that in some measure the forms of the cherubim upon the Ark and upon the veil before the Holiest corresponded with those so clearly delineated. It may be concluded that the human form predominated in them, although some expositors claim that the ox form was most prominent. But Ezekiel expressly says of them, "This was their appearance, they had the likeness of a man." He says also, "They had the hands of a man under their wings on their four sides." Isaiah, Ezekiel, and John agree in representing them as offering intelligent and devout praise to God, and in the Apocalypse they are represented as singing with the twenty-four elders on the steps of the throne the song of the redeemed. They also had "each one a harp and golden bowls full of

incense, which are the prayers of saints" (Rev. 5⁶⁻¹⁰).

Many expositors assume that the descriptions given by the prophets of the cherubim were derived from, or at least coloured by, the composite animal forms found in Egypt and Assyria. There is, however, much less resemblance between the cherubim and these heathen forms than is generally supposed. Bähr, who has treated on this subject more fully than any other writer, says he could find little resemblance to them among Egyptian figures except the wings. The sphinx is oftenest pointed out as related in appearance to the cherubim. This has the head of a man with the body of a lion, and is supposed to represent the union of intellect with physical force. This is manifestly a very inferior conception to that of Ezekiel or Isaiah. It is much the same with the winged bulls of Assyria, which may have been seen by Ezekiel and may to some extent have coloured his vision. It may be that originally a grain of truth was embodied in these productions of the religious spirit in Egypt and Assyria; and if so, it might be gathered up and embodied by the messengers of a divine revelation in the more perfect and elaborate symbols of which they made use. But there was this radical contrast

between the cherubim and the composite figures of the heathen: the honours of worship were paid to the symbolic forms of the heathen, but the cherubim of Scripture are ever represented as engaged in faithful service for God or as offering Him profound adoration. The Jews, therefore, were carefully guarded against the danger of offering idolatrous honours or worship to them.

How far the sacred writers were or were not influenced in their conception of the cherubim by the composite forms of Egypt or Assyria is an unprofitable and insignificant matter compared with the questions, What were they designed to symbolise? what great truths were they meant to represent?

It has already been pointed out that the human idea predominated in the cherubim and that the animal forms were merely contributory and subsidiary. These must therefore have been intended to convey to the minds of the people an ideal or perfect creaturehood which added to the moral and intellectual qualities of human nature the patient industriousness of the ox, the strength and majesty of the lion, and the soaring sweep of the eagle. Each of the animals used in the combined figures was the head of its own order. The cherubim, therefore,

were a union of the best and highest gifts and attributes bestowed by God upon all orders of the creatures so far as we have knowledge thereof. The noblest qualities of mind are common, so far as we can ascertain, to men and to angels. These latter may by their unstained holiness, their close association with heavenly things, their long training in lofty ministries, occupy a vantage ground which is impossible to man whilst on earth. But as to their original powers and faculties, there is no reason to think that they are in any way superior to man. As to spiritual gifts and intellectual endowments, it is probable that men and angels are on an equal footing; but as to physical advantages, man is much inferior to many of the animal creation. He has not the regal force of the lion, he cannot perform the heavy labour of the ox, he cannot soar into the firmament until he is lost in the dazzling glory of the sun like the eagle. The ox rather than the horse was made use of in the symbol because the latter was not used generally for agricultural labour in the ancient world; whilst the ox, because of its patient and enduring industriousness in the field, was held in the highest regard by man and even came to be worshipped by the peoples of Egypt, Assyria, and India. More than once the Israelites themselves

lapsed into this shameful cult, as when Aaron made a calf or ox of gold for the people to worship and when Jeroboam set up the same idol at Bethel and Dan as a rival to the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem.

By this combination of the noblest physical qualities of the animal creation with the highest faculties of man there was presented a higher type of creaturehood than any single creature could symbolise. Possibly the cherubim represented man gifted and endowed as God meant him to be in a state of purity and majesty, the head and crown of the visible creation. Or it might be that God meant to educate in the human mind, by means of these symbolic beings, an adequate idea of the exalted condition and attributes to which men might attain by obedience to His commands and the faithful observance of His covenant. The fact of the cherubim being seen by John in "the midst of the throne," nearer even than the twenty-four elders, seems to give reason to suppose that they were a pictorial representation of man redeemed and restored by Christ, and exalted to highest offices and enjoyments.

Some such view as this has long been entertained by biblical exegetes, and one old

English poetaster has embodied it in these lines—

Each righteous man contains these symbols four :
For human sense he claims the human face ;
The ox in self-denial finds a place ;
Lion is he as conqueror in hard straits ;
Eagle, for oft he seeks the heavenly gates.

Another all-important fact in connection with the cherubim is, that they are ever found closely associated with the brightest manifestations of the Divine Glory. The only exception to this is when they were appointed to guard the approach to the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. But in the Holiest Place in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple, the Shekinah shone forth from between them and Jehovah was addressed in worship : "Thou who dwellest between the cherubim." More wonderfully still is this exemplified in the visions of the prophets and of the Exile of Patmos. In each case they were the most intimate and honoured attendants of the Eternal God. If they were symbolic of perfect creaturehood, and are always found in close proximity to the Infinite Glory, then it naturally follows that such excellence and perfectness are only to be realised or possessed by those who dwell in the very shadow of the Almighty, who know His

secret and bathe themselves in the river of His pleasures. The cherubim were seen by Isaiah and Ezekiel as being "full of eyes." This denoted their marvellous intelligence and insight. But intellect never attains perfect maturity, and insight is never so keen and clear as when the creature is in living communion with someone higher than itself. Man is ever a learner; he is never independent; he has no original spring of knowledge or wisdom in himself, and it is only when he is livingly united to God in Christ, as the branch in the vine or the member in the body, that either intellectual or spiritual faculties can develop into fulness and ripeness. Therefore the cherubim were full of eyes and ran to and fro as the lightning, and therefore also the great leaders of the race in all the ages have been men who could lift the world forward, men who have either found God and have clung to Him with tenacious grasp, or they have groped in the darkness, "feeling after Him if haply they might find Him," and in thus "feeling" have gained so much of the Divine knowledge and influence as to make them at least "tutors" (*paidagogoi*, Gal. 3²⁴) "to bring men to Christ." Most of those who have been enlightened, and felt the powers of the world to come, and lived in the Divine fulness, have been charged with

heavenly virtue, have seen light in His light, have been touched with living fire from the altar, have wrought righteousness, have stopped cruel vices, have elevated and purified men's thought, proclaimed the word of life, and turned armies of aliens to serve the living God. These men have risen on the eagle wings of faith and obtained the promises ; they have been transfigured into the Divine likeness, and reflected true majesty ; they have been the most real workers in behalf of humanity, and have helped most effectually the kingdom of God.

One more great lesson is taught us by the cherubim. They not only represent the truth that the highest creaturehood can only evolve in communion with God, but that in the worship and adoration of God they find their highest enjoyment and noblest employment. No glimpse of the cherubim is ever given in which they are not either engaged in special service for God or in contemplating His ineffable beauty and offering Him profoundest worship. They do His bidding with swift alacrity, they bow before Him in reverential awe, they hymn His praises in loftiest strains, they sun themselves in His glory evermore.

Is not this the great end of life ? The desires after purity, holiness, consecrating and trans-

figuring fellowship, which articulate themselves in the human heart, can only receive their satisfaction in God. The purified, sanctified, spiritualised nature can only find adequate bliss and untiring occupation in the contemplation of the Divine Glory and in offering to the King of Kings an unending and rapturous tribute of worship.

CHAPTER V

THE SACRIFICE FOR SIN

PART I

CHAPTER V

THE SACRIFICE FOR SIN (PART I)

IN the Scriptures the word Sacrifice is used to express the infliction of death on a living creature as an act of solemn religious worship, and as an offering to God whereby the forgiveness of sin may be obtained, and acknowledgement made for the wrong done by sin to His majesty and government.

The practice of sacrifice belongs to all ages both in relation to true and false religions. It has had a place of supreme importance in the worship of the race. By the very modes of its observance men have testified the high estimate with which they have regarded the rite. Rarely if ever have inferior animals been devoted to sacrifice, but generally those of most value and service to man. The officiating ministers have always been regarded with awe and reverence, whether they have been the patriarchs of tribes or the priests of the people. In times of critical

strain and anxiety human victims have been immolated as though the more precious the victim the more readily would the Divine wrath be averted and pardon of sin obtained. This awful practice prevailed in the nations of the West into the sixth and seventh centuries of the Christian era, and it was common in the nations of the Orient up to the present century.

It has been a ripe subject of discussion among modern writers as to whether sacrifice is of Divine or merely human origin. Upon the latter hypothesis it is affirmed that it is simply a visible expression of homage to the Divine Being. But this conclusion neither meets the demands of the case nor is it in accordance with the statements of the Word of God. Gifts expressive of man's gratitude and allegiance have been freely presented to God in all ages, but these must be relegated to another category than the sacrifices commanded in the Bible, or those offered so universally in the heathen world.

If sacrifices were only an expression of thankfulness and loyalty to God, why the requirement of the Levitical law, or whence the notion, apparently universal, that there must be an altar, and a living victim, whose blood must be shed, to make the ceremony acceptable to God or satisfying to the soul? Rationalising writers have

often argued that animal sacrifices could not be well-pleasing to a God of love. The objection might be allowed if nothing more than thankfulness or reverence were expressed in the rite. It is, however, a fact that in all nations the practice of sacrifice has been grounded upon the conviction of the evil of sin and the need of its expiation. The idea may often have been distorted, the expression of it may often have been degrading and cruel, but it has been there as the groundwork and explanation of sacrifice in all ages. It is impossible rightly to account for this prevailing feature of the world's worship without giving due consideration to this fact, that expiation for sin and the substitution of an innocent victim for the offender have ever been essential elements in the observance.

The earliest offering of sacrifice occurred shortly after the fall of man and under circumstances which seem to indicate a Divine authority for its presentation. In mercy to man God announced to our first parents the coming of One who should both suffer the penalties of sin and destroy sin, One who by enduring its sting and shame would become its conqueror and destroyer. The very next chapter in the history of mankind puts us face to face with sacrifice, the offering of animal victims to the Lord. The superior

nature of Abel's offering is shown by the acceptance of it by God in contrast with His rejection of Cain's offering. Abel presented the firstlings and fat of the fold, living things, whilst Cain presented the fruits of the earth. It must, however, be noted that the quality which made Abel's offering pleasing was not simply that he presented animal victims, but that it was offered in faith. "*By faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous" (Heb. 11⁴).

If this record of the first animal sacrifice, presented in close proximity to the first mention of "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," be viewed in conjunction with the sacrifices offered under the Jewish law, and which the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews affirms to have been symbolic of the Sacrifice of Christ, we cannot resist the conclusion that the promise and prophecy of the Messiah given to our first parents must have been followed by the institution of a means whereby through all time men could obtain the unspeakable benefits accruing from the Great Sacrifice which in the fulness of time would be offered "once for all," "one Sacrifice for sins for ever" (Heb. 10¹⁰⁻¹²). It is in this relation that we find the explanation

of the words, "By faith, Abel," etc. The faith of Abel here referred to was not general but specific in its character. It was not a general confidence in God nor in the operations of His Providence, but he looked forward to, rested in an unseen but coming Saviour, who was typified in the sacrifice he offered and in the blood which was poured out. He looked not to the lambs which he presented upon the altar but to the promised Saviour. Through the long vista of the ages "he saw His day and rejoiced and was glad." And he died "not having received the promises, but having seen and greeted them from afar" (Heb. 11¹³). It was the exercise of faith in connection with his sacrifice that pleased God. Two offerings were presented: one was accepted, the other was rejected. The acceptable element in the one was faith. But how could faith prompt to the offering of the blood of animals in sacrifice unless God had revealed His will to man in relation to such a rite? Faith in exercise is obedience. "Faith working through love" (Gal. 5⁶). The natural succession in Abel's act was: Faith — Obedience — Sacrifice. But faith in what? This throws us back upon the rudimentary revelation of Paradise, which had its gradual unfolding in the provisions of the Mosaic law and its culmination in the

Atoning Act of Calvary. Abel's faith wrought obedience, and the obedience took the form of the sacrifice of the firstlings and fat of the fold. The inevitable conclusion is that such an outcome could only be by Divine appointment and arrangement.

It must also be borne in mind that such sacrifices as were offered by Abel or the pious Jews, if presented merely as a voluntary or arbitrary act on their parts, or as an invention of their own imagination, could not have been pleasing to God, as no intelligent or intelligible reason could have been rendered for so extraordinary a ceremony. It could neither have been an accident thrown out by special or abnormal circumstances, nor a deliberate conclusion of man's judgement. In either of these cases God could not have approved of the rite, as no adequate end would have been reached by it. But if it be concluded that it was a solemn and symbolic act, by which the highest happiness of the race could be promoted and secured, it is at once divested of any trace of superstition or will-worship, and becomes invested with the elevating quality of faith, with all it means in the life and happiness of man. One fact is indisputable, that during the earliest ages God accepted the sacrifices offered to Him by the

patriarchs and blessed them abundantly for their piety. This surely seals the rite as being one of Divine appointment.

The root idea of sacrifice is substitution. This involves atonement, redemption, vicarious suffering, and forgiveness. The idea recurs in the Old Testament a hundred times in the use of the word atonement, which signifies "covering"; the substitute covering, or taking the place of the transgressor. Hence the words: "Blessed is he . . . whose sin is covered" (Ps. 32¹). The provision of the law is clear on this point: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh atonement by reason of the life" (Lev. 17¹¹). This passage plainly teaches that the shedding of blood was the essential act of sacrifice; that the appointment of the rite meant atonement for sin; that the blood atoned on the principle of substitution, it was life for life. It was solely on this ground that there was any virtue in the observance. Some modern critics have revolted from the idea of blood having a place in a solemn religious ceremony, on the ground that it is incompatible with a right estimate of Divine tenderness and love. The objection overlooks the fact that the blood as

being the life is the most precious and sacred thing in the world. As representing life it alone could become an antidote to that death which was the wages of sin. Only the sacrifice of the life could express the exceeding evil of sin as an act of defiance against God and rebellion against His government. This truth pervades the whole of Scripture and was to some extent accepted by heathen peoples. The signification of the sacrifice is unmistakable from the manner and the circumstances under which it was carried out. The purity required in the animal, its immolation upon the altar, the solemn presentation of the blood in the Holiest, joined with the confession of the worshipper and the intercession of the priest, must have made it eloquent with instruction on the evil of sin, the severity of its penalties, the substitution of the victim and the blessedness of salvation. By the Oriental mind the symbolism of the act would be more readily comprehended than by the more literal Western mind, and yet by it the definite teaching of sacrifice was vividly apprehended. Homer repeatedly speaks of it as appeasing the gods, averting their wrath and procuring pardon for the offenders. Cæsar declares that the Gauls and Ancient Britons believed strongly in the propitiatory effect of their animal and human

sacrifices. Indeed, Greek and Roman historians might be quoted *ad libitum* to the same effect.

It must, however, be clearly borne in mind that the Scriptures insist that the sacrifices offered were nothing in themselves, but that their efficacy depended upon a right state of mind, and especially upon the exercise of faith on the part of the worshipper in the expiatory work of that great Deliverer promised by God to the race after the Fall. In ages of spiritual declension, when religion had become an empty mockery, when legal rites and symbols had degenerated into useless forms, the prophets declaimed vigorously against the presentation of vain ceremonies to God which embodied no faith or sincerity. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me? saith the Lord: . . . bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to Me, . . . I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting" (Isa. 1^{11, 13}).

There were several offerings instituted by the Levitical law, but it is the sin offering which has been chiefly referred to in the preceding statements, and which will now be definitely considered. Three animal sacrifices were presented to God by the Jews: the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offering. Each of these had a peculiar feature in them.

The blood of the first was sprinkled on the horns of the altar ; in the second the victim was totally consumed by fire ; and the offering of the third was followed by a feast of gladness. One element was common to all, viz. the offering of blood upon the altar as an expiation of sin. The sacrifice for sin was the chief offering and the necessary forerunner of the others. Though important, they were impossible until the first had been observed. In this great offering the idea of atonement was supreme. It had special relation to the pardon of sin and the purification of the whole person of the offender, and so differed from the trespass offering, which had relation to a single offence only. The high symbolism of the sin offering can only be understood by a careful study of the method of procedure on the Day of Atonement, the great festival of the year, which meant salvation for a whole people. Upon that day in the wilderness epoch, the millions of Israel assembled round the door of the tabernacle : in later days the Jews gathered from all quarters of the land, and even of the world, in Jerusalem, and filled the temple courts, a vast and solemnised throng. The sole actor in the leading events of the day was the High Priest. He occupied a position of solitary prominence throughout the whole impressive

ceremonial. He had to act as Mediator between God and man ; he had to enter the Holiest Place and stand in presence of the blazing Shekinah ; he had to make atonement and offer intercession ; therefore he must undergo preparation. Seven days before the appointed time he came to the official rooms in the temple and occupied the whole time in practising priestly rites in order that he might discharge his weighty functions unerringly. During the night before the great day he was kept awake and spent the long hours in reading and expounding the Divine law. With the dawning day his duties began. In order to emphasise the necessity of perfect purity in the chief agent he washed his whole body and changed his raiment five times in the day, and washed his hands and feet ten times. Clothed in his garments of glory and beauty he performed the leading portions of the morning service. Then he washed himself, put aside his robes of state, and arrayed himself in pure white garments expressive of spotless sanctity. The infinite work of offering universal atonement could only be accomplished by One who "knew no sin," and the symbolic mediator must embody the same idea. The High Priest took a bullock for his own sin offering, and laying his hands on its head confessed his sins and besought pardon, saying,

“Jehovah, I entreat Thee, *cover over* the iniquities, transgressions, and sins which I have committed, transgressed, and sinned against Thee, I and my house.” Then he confessed over the head of the animal the sins of the priesthood; then he slew the victim, caught its blood in a golden basin, and gave it to an attendant who kept stirring the blood to prevent it coagulating. Meantime, he took the golden censer, filled it with burning coals, took a handful of incense in a dish, and with these slowly entered the Holy of Holies. There in the olden days he stood before the Ark with the Mercy Seat and cherubim all bathed in the glory of the Divine Presence. He placed the censer between the staves of the Ark and sprinkled on the coals the sacred frankincense. Stepping backward outside the veil he made urgent prayer for himself and the priesthood, the people meantime bowing in solemn silence in the sanctuary. Then he quickly took from the attendant the blood in the basin, entered the Holiest with it, sprinkled it on and about the Mercy Seat, and coming forth set down what remained in the Holy Place before the veil.

Following these proceedings came the most awe-inspiring of the day's ceremonial. In the Court of the Priests, close to the crowd of worshippers, stood an urn in which were two

lots made of boxwood in the first temple, but of gold in the second. One bore the inscription "for Jehovah," the other "for Azazel," which is rendered in the Authorised Version "scapegoat," and in the Revised Version said to mean "dismissal." Out of the public treasury, to signify that everybody had a share in it, two goats had been purchased, and placed with their faces towards the door of the sanctuary and their backs towards the people. The High Priest came forth and faced the crowd, shook the urn, and putting both hands into it drew forth the lots, laying one on the head of each goat. These had been carefully chosen of the same colour, size, and appearance, so that in every particular they might seem to represent but one victim and offering. The lot being cast the High Priest tied a tongue-shaped piece of scarlet cloth round the horn of the goat for Azazel, and another round the throat of that for Jehovah. He then took the latter animal, slew it upon the altar, took its blood in a basin, and carrying it into the Holiest, he sprinkled it on and about the Mercy Seat. Then he came forth, set down the basin before the veil, took up the bullock's blood, sprinkled it towards the veil, did the same with the blood of the goat, then mixed the two together and sprinkled therewith the horns of the

altar and the altar of incense. Then he poured what remained down a drain by the side of the altar of burnt sacrifice.

Thus was atonement made; thus were High Priest, the priesthood, and the people cleansed from sin. There only remained one thing more. It was that they should realise the cleansing, that the conscience should be lightened of its sense of guilt. This was the last act of the eventful day. The goat "for Azazel" had been turned round and stood with its face toward the crowd, the scarlet cloth upon its horn flaunting before them the message of their guilt. The High Priest comes forth from the sanctuary, stands over the animal, lays his hand upon its head, and confesses over it the sins of the people. As he finishes, it bears by implication on its devoted head the guilt of the people as it had been transferred to it by those blood-stained hands and those divinely prompted words. Amidst deathly stillness the crowd opens, "a fit man" takes hold of the goat and leads it through the parted throng. In later days it was taken through Solomon's Porch and out of the eastern gate of the city. It was led over a bridge to the Mount of Olives, and on for miles until the edge of the wilderness was reached. Here the man led the goat a few steps backward

and then pushed it over the edge of a steep declivity, having, however, torn off half of the scarlet cloth, which he attached to the projecting cliff. Now he retraced his steps. Heralds had been placed at ten stages of the journey who were provided with flags, by the waving of which was telegraphed the news to the waiting multitude that their sins had been carried into the land of forgetfulness, illustrating the Divine words: "Your sins and iniquities will I remember no more." Then the sun set on a happy and rejoicing nation.

CHAPTER VI

THE SACRIFICE FOR SIN

PART II

CHAPTER VI

THE SACRIFICE FOR SIN (PART II)

ONE more interesting feature of the Day of Atonement remains to be named. When the news reached the people that the goat bearing their sins had been cast away, the High Priest put off his linen garments and bathed himself in the golden laver. Then he put on his robes of state: blue, purple, scarlet, and gold, the ephod, the robe of the ephod, the girdle, the crown, and the mitre; he assumed the breastplate, sparkling with diamond, sapphire, ruby, and all precious gems, and came forth into the sanctuary. He offered burnt offerings for himself and the people in token of their entire consecration to the Divine service, and with some minor observances this day of solemn ceremonial and symbolic significance came to an end. Thus had been represented a pure priest and priesthood, a pure sanctuary and a pure people.

1 To rightly estimate the bearing and meaning of this crowning national festival, several things must be observed. The sin confessed over the heads of the victims by the High Priest did not refer to lapses in the observance of the ceremonial law, nor to offences of a civil character, nor to occasional breaches of the moral law; but it was a confession of a sinful heart and nature, it was an acknowledgement of the evil of sin as defiance of God and as deserving of penalty. It was a testimony against sin in its gravest aspects.

2 Sincere repentance was to be experienced if the sacrifice was to be an efficient expiation. The day was to be one of fasting, and the outward abstinence was intended to express an inward sorrow and loathing of the sin which had been committed. The moral state of the worshipper was an important element in the case, and if he was sincere the offering did undoubtedly avail on his behalf.

The people were carefully guarded against supposing that the offerings had any virtue in themselves to atone for sin. "For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10⁴). This truth was imbedded in the very nature of the rite. Of what avail would be two kids as an atonement for the sins of a whole nation? They cost but little if borne

by an individual, but when the price was divided among a million of worshippers it was infinitesimal. Therefore they could not be considered to have merit or value in themselves. The symbolic character of the service must have been recognised if the people had the slightest apprehension of the genius of their religion. The infinite issues which hung upon a sacrifice of such small material value stamped it as being symbolic and not finally conclusive in its bearings.

Of course there were sins which were atoned for and pardoned on the sole ground of certain offerings being presented on behalf of the offenders. These were minor offences relating to the ritual of the sanctuary, or civic duties of life, or wrong done to a neighbour, and suchlike. To expiate these the trespass offering, the morning and evening sacrifices, and the monthly offerings were instituted; but the whole elaborate and solemn ceremonial of the Day of Atonement had a higher meaning and larger results. It was no mere pageant or vain show, but was designed to speak of and exhibit eternal truth and spiritual realities of supremely important character.

These truths and realities all clustered round the promised Christ. He was the centre, the hidden life, the travailing power of the whole system. Judaism was instinct with Him, and

He was ever articulating His gospel with growing distinctness to the religious consciousness of the people, but most of all to the childlike and eagerly responsive souls who gave to the old Church its spirituality and glory. The whole ritual of the Day of Atonement was a symbol, an exposition, and a prophecy of Christianity on its highest side. The consummated gospel of the Christian Church is a key which unlocks for us the mysteries of Judaism, but the living spirit of the expected and yearned-for Messiah interpreted its secret message to the faithful souls who looked for and greeted His appearing. Apart from their relation to Christ the doctrines and truths meant to be expressed by these rites could have been mere abstract principles, if indeed they could have carried any instruction or inspiration to the mind of man at all. Even if they were recognised as such they could not have been reduced to a working system of moral conduct. If they were only factors in the Divine government, apart from their reference to Christ, they could have imparted no comfort or salvation to men. But when the symbol placed in pictorial form before the receptive mind the great facts of redemption which were afterwards to be consummated in the life and death of the Christ, the people had a definite ground of faith and an

unfailing spring of comfort. They were able not only to grasp the idea of atonement, but they were led to trust in the Deliverer who would atone for sin and place them in a salvable condition. In the High Priest they saw a mediator purified and sanctified for his work entering the Holiest to intercede in their behalf, and rising on the wings of faith they saw that Greater High Priest who has passed into the heavens to appear in man's behalf and to offer for them and us an efficient and perpetual intercession. They had the truth emphasised in a manner it would be impossible to forget: that "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9²²), and they had their minds raised to One who with richer blood would enter "the upper sanctuary and true tabernacle" to represent there an all-meritorious offering. They learnt, moreover, that in the atonement made all who were truly penitent and rested by faith in the Divine Christ were cleansed from sin and made whiter than snow.

It is not possible for us to judge exactly as to the measure of intelligent apprehension each worshipper had of these facts and truths, or to pronounce how far by clear mental vision they penetrated into the fulfilment of type and prophecy. Doubtless, in some the understanding

would be crude and rudimentary, but others would be more receptive as they grew in simplicity of heart and purity of nature. The framers of the national literature had keen spiritual vision and appreciated vividly the scope of these wondrous rites; and they were not alone. In the nation there were many meek, humble, pious souls, the lights of the Jewish world, whose simple faith made realities of the things hoped for and became evidence of things not seen as yet.

When the symbol and the reality are placed side by side the resemblances and correspondences become startling. Over the head of the goat were laid the sins of the people and for their sins the animal shed its blood. "So," cried the prophet in his rapt vision, "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all" (Isa. 53⁶), and "He poured out His soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53^{6, 12}).

When the victim had been offered upon the altar the High Priest entered within the veil and presented the blood, which was the life, and made intercession for the transgressor. So Christ "having been offered to bear the sin of many," is now "sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," where

“He liveth evermore to make intercession for us” (Heb. 7²⁵).

The High Priest was not allowed to enter the Holiest Place without the blood of the victim; “not without blood” (Heb. 9⁷). So Christ, “through His own blood entered in once for all into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption” (Heb. 9¹²).

In all these and other comparisons which might be referred to, the reality immeasurably surpassed the symbol in its significance and importance, just as the man surpasses the portrait, however striking a resemblance it may be. Thus Christ not only answers to and fulfils all the types of the old law but in some respects far exceeds them. For He lives in the highest heavens not only as our Representative and Mediator, but as our Forerunner (Heb. 6²⁰). His presence in glory is the standing pledge of the final triumph and exaltation of His people: “Where I am there shall My servant be” (John 12²⁶).

It is only necessary to refer briefly to the other animal sacrifices provided for in the Levitical law, viz. the burnt offering and the peace offering. The bloodless offerings belong to another category and properly cannot be called sacrifices. They had different meanings

and applications from the rites above referred to.

The burnt offering is termed in the Hebrew *olah*, signifying to ascend. It was so called because the victim was entirely consumed by fire upon the altar and presumably ascended to heaven in smoke and fire. As a sacrifice of blood it had a propitiatory element in it, as the worshipper was required to place his hands upon its head and confess his sin. Then it was expressly said "to be accepted for him, to make atonement for him" (Lev. 14). But the rite was chiefly intended to symbolise the entire consecration of the worshipper to God. In the process of sacrifice the animal was slain, its blood was poured out upon the altar; it was then skinned, and the skin was retained by the priest as his perquisite. Then it was divided into portions that it might be consumed the more easily. Some portions were washed to cleanse them from defilement, then the whole was laid on the altar and a hot fire consumed it. This offering clearly denoted the spiritual relationship of the believer as being offered up "body, soul, and spirit," "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God" (Rom. 12¹). A lamb was presented morning and evening in the sanctuary service to indicate the lasting character of the dedication.

The altar used for the purpose stood in the court of the temple and was called "the altar of burnt sacrifice."

The idea of atonement in this rite was different to that embodied in sin offering. This related rather to shortcomings and imperfections which touched the daily life of the worshipper than to sin in its essence and penal nature. It was the lesson taught by Christ when He washed the feet of His disciples in the upper chamber: "he that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit" (John 13¹⁰).

There was a remarkable comprehensiveness in the burnt offering. Indeed it gathered into itself every element of the sacrificial rite. Moses concentrated the sacrificial duties of the priesthood in the words: "They shall put incense before Thee and whole burnt offering upon Thine altar" (Dent. 33¹⁰). It was a perpetual sacrifice, offered morning and evening, so arranged that the fire never went out and the offering was ever ascending before God, thus representing the continual service of love and devotion which arises from the heart of the believer. In addition to the daily offerings it was ordered to be presented on other occasions, as when special mercies called for acknowledgement, or when critical circumstances

prompted to increased faith and prayer. On the Sabbaths and the new moons and other festivals the burnt offering was presented after the ordinary worship.

In the entire consumption of the animal by fire the believer saw in figure his whole life being dedicated to God in willing service, being prompted thereto by devout gratitude for having experienced the forgiveness of sin and the favour of God. The presentation of meats and drinks accompanied the offering, to intimate that not only the man but his possessions and the fruits of his labours were likewise rendered cheerfully to God.

The peace offering was called *shelamin*, meaning to make up a deficiency or to compensate for something lacking. It was a voluntary sacrifice, prompted by a burst of pious feeling or the experience of extraordinary blessings. The only occasion when it was definitely enjoined was the Feast of Pentecost, when the fruits of harvest were gathered in and gladness filled the land. It was a joyous sacrifice, an offering of completion, a feast of Divine communion. After the sin offering had atoned for the transgressor and brought assurance of pardon, after the burnt offering had expressed the complete consecration of the believer, in fit

order came the peace offering as symbolising the adoring thanksgiving of a sanctified heart. "With a freewill offering will I sacrifice unto Thee. I will give thanks unto Thy name, O Lord, for it is good" (Ps. 54⁶).

As being thus a voluntary sacrifice expressive of joy and thanksgiving, the peace offering indicated the possession by the worshipper of perfect peace with God. In this sense it was an offering of completeness, it was the testimony of an overflowing experience of Divine love, it was an evidence that the Divine promise had been realised: "My people shall be *satisfied* with My goodness" (Jer. 31¹⁴).

Peace offerings were both public and private, and upon great national occasions they were of enormous extent. On the dedication of Solomon's temple 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep were presented as peace offerings, and fitly so, as it was the heyday of the nation's prosperity and the flood-tide of its religious life. On a large scale also these gifts were offered when the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem was celebrated by Nehemiah. The sacrifice was invariably followed by a feast in which holy joy found a natural and congenial expression.

By these great sacrifices, in which blood was

a necessary element, the leading doctrines of the gospel were adumbrated to the old Church. Thus the religious life of the people was preserved and cultivated, the longing for the Christ was intensified, the way was prepared for His coming, and the principles of a lasting and universal gospel were written upon the human consciousness.

CHAPTER VII
THE HIGH PRIEST AND HIS
VESTMENTS
PART I

*symbol sacrifice for sin by man the
Day of Atonement*
High Priest (officer)
Office of High Priest symbol
CHAPTER VII

THE HIGH PRIEST AND HIS VESTMENTS

(PART I)

THE most illustrious type of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Levitical Dispensation was the High Priest. To him alone belonged the privilege of entering behind the veil into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, and upon him devolved the dread responsibility of presenting the sacrifice for the sin of the nation and of making intercession for it before the Lord. He stood before the people as invested with an awful prerogative and a unique sanctity. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews sums up the essential conditions of priesthood with much brevity and clearness. In chapter 5 he points out that the distinctive function of the priest is to "offer gifts and sacrifices for sin," that he must be one who has entire fellow-feeling (*sumpatheō*), or sympathy, with the sinner in his sorrows and desolations, and there-

fore a partaker of the same nature; and that he must receive his appointment directly from God. "No man taketh the honour to himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron." All these requirements were fulfilled in the High Priest under the law, and also in the Person and functions of Jesus, the great High Priest of our profession.

Among the Jews the priestly office was confined to members of the tribe of Levi, but the great honours of the office were limited to the family of Aaron. He is emphatically referred to as "the priest" and as "the anointed priest," but the term "high priest" does not occur until the reign of King Jehoshaphat in Judah (2 Kings 12¹⁰). To Aaron and his successors were reserved the great official duties of the Day of Atonement and other national solemnities and festivities. In connection with the functions of the High Priest, much importance was attached to his official garments, and much light is thrown upon his position and the duties of his office by careful consideration of them.

Nothing appeals more directly and forcibly to the popular imagination than dress. It may not be very honourable to human nature, but it is an undeniable fact. This may be the reason, added to the convenience of the arrangement,

why, in all ages, those who have held high official positions among men have worn distinguishing vestments and ornaments. Kings, judges, priests, and other civil and ecclesiastical functionaries have had appropriate robes, vestments, and decorations by which they might be easily recognised and by which they might more readily claim the respect and homage due to their dignity. There was, however, more meaning than ordinary in the raiment commanded to be worn by the High Priest of the Jews. It was not only a distinguishing but a symbolic garb; there was deep religious significance attaching to every portion of it.

There were certain articles of apparel which were common to all the priesthood. These consisted of (*a*) the coat, which was commanded to be of fine linen, carefully woven, and to reach from the shoulders to the feet; (*b*) the mitre, also to be of linen, and which, from the etymology of the word, would seem to have resembled the cup of a flower, worn upside down on the head of the priest; (*c*) the breeches or drawers, covering the loins and legs, also to be of fine linen; and (*d*) the girdle, which was to be "of fine twined linen, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, the work of the embroiderer" (Ex. 39²⁹). The coat was woven of one piece like the

seamless robe of the Saviour, and fitted close to the person. The mitre was also called a bonnet, and in the Revised Version is rendered "turban" in the margin.¹ These garments were made of the white shining material called "byssus," and grown chiefly in Egypt. With the exception of the girdle, these were worn in their purest whiteness, reference to which is made in Rev. 19⁸: "And it was given to her" (the bride of the Lamb) "that she should array herself in fine linen bright and pure: for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

These garments were intended to convey the ideas of absolute purity and sincerity. The office of the priest was a sacred one, and demanded perfect holiness of character and conduct. This was not only symbolised by the whiteness of his priestly robes, but was conveyed in the fact that no covering was provided for the feet. In the warm climate of the East the shoe or sandal was not required to protect the feet from cold, but from dust and defilement.

¹ The marginal readings of the Old Testament Revised Version are of peculiar importance. The writer was informed some years ago, on safe authority, that the Old Testament Revisers were so much impressed with the violent outcry against the New Testament Revisers that they placed many of their most valuable readings in the margin rather than the text, so as not to unduly shock popular prejudices.

Hence the wearing of the shoe might indicate the fear of contracting dirt, and the uncovered feet meant service in a holy place, and a service which was holy in its very nature.

In addition to the foregoing *priestly* garments, the High Priest had four additional garments of a peculiarly significant and typical character, which lifted him beyond the position of the ordinary priesthood and made him a person of national prominence and unique influence. To appear without these vestments in the Holy Place was for him to incur the penalty of death. The most minute and careful instructions are given concerning them. They were the robe of the ephod, the ephod, the breastplate, and the crown.

(a) The robe of the ephod was worn over the ordinary garment of the High Priest. It was woven throughout in one piece, dyed entirely of blue, "and upon the skirts of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the skirts thereof . . . a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a pomegranate upon the skirts of the robe round about" (Ex. 28³³).

It may be stated generally that the dress of the High Priest was typical throughout and symbolised several important truths. When God made the covenant with the people at

Sinai, He said: "Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me from among all people: for all the earth is Mine. And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation" (Ex. 19⁵). Thus Israel sustained a threefold relation to God: they were a covenant people, and therefore had committed to them the oracles of God; they were a royal seed—God was their King in a special and exceptional manner; and they were a priestly people, as having a divinely ordained priesthood of representative character before God. This threefold relation had its correspondence in the functions of the High Priest, and these again were represented in the official garb which was provided for him by the Divine command. The first portion, as has been pointed out, symbolised his priestly function and calling; the robe of the ephod typified his position as bearing the testimony or covenant of Jehovah; the ephod and the breastplate symbolised his calling as the chief judge and ruler in Israel; the crown or diadem expressed the same idea of rulership with the consecrating element of holiness as the hallowing and pervading quality of the nation and all that pertained to it. These considerations receive illustration

and confirmation by the prophecy of the Messiah: "He shall sit and rule upon His throne, and He shall be a priest upon His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both" (Zech. 6¹³).

The robe of the High Priest was to be of blue to symbolise the divinity of the covenant. Blue was the Divine colour. It is the colour of the firmament, with which instinctively we connect the throne of God. Our blessed Lord lifted up His eyes to heaven in prayer, Stephen the martyr "looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God." Blue became, as the colour of the sky, a natural symbol of heaven, and by an easy transition of thought of God also, amongst both Jews and heathen. The Egyptians painted the images of their gods blue. The Persian priests, or sofi, wore blue robes, or mantles, to intimate that they were associated with Divine mysteries. It is the colour employed in Christian art to set forth Divine attributes and perfections. The male members of Israel were commanded "that they make fringes in the borders of their garments . . . and that they put upon the fringe of each border a cord of blue, and it shall be to you for a fringe that ye may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them" (Num. 15³⁹). The blue cord was a constant

reminder that they were included in a Divine covenant and had an obligation therein of a peculiarly sacred kind. In the Scriptures, blue is directly associated with the throne of God. When Moses and the seventy elders of Israel beheld the glory of God in the Holy Mount, "there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone and as it were the very heaven for clearness" (Ex. 24¹⁰). Ezekiel in his vision of the unseen world beheld "the likeness of a throne as the appearance of a sapphire stone" (Ezek. 1²⁶). Thus the blue colour of the High Priest's robe symbolised the divineness of the law and covenant which was the distinguishing possession of Israel.

The robe was to be woven throughout in one piece, "with a hole for the head in the midst thereof: it shall have a binding of woven work round about the hole of it" (Ex. 28³²). Thus was represented the harmony and completeness of the revelation of the law and covenant which the Lord had given them. It was one law and covenant of eternal righteousness, gradual in its unfoldings until "the fulness of time," but in its essence and obligations one complete and orderly whole. The border of the robe was peculiarly symbolical of instructive and comforting truths. As has been shown above, it was to be embroidered

with pomegranates of blue, purple, and scarlet, with golden bells between them round about. The fruit of the pomegranate tree is the most complete quencher of thirst in the hot climate of the East. It is a fruit of beautiful appearance, filled with seeds, arranged in perfect order, which lie in a juicy pulp of deep rose colour. In the flowery Oriental style the pomegranate was used by the Jews to illustrate the Word of God in its fulness and fruitfulness. "A word fitly spoken," says Solomon, "is like apples of gold in baskets of silver" (Prov. 25¹¹). But to express the excellence of the Divine Word the pomegranate was frequently used as being pleasant both to taste and smell, and being full of seed. Thus says the Gemara: "The fire of hell shall have no power over the children of Israel who are full of the Word of God as a pomegranate." So the Targum of Joseph the Blind, paraphrasing Cant. 4¹³, says: "Thy children are filled with the commandments of God like a pomegranate." Hence, wrought in rich colours upon the skirt of the High Priest's robe, they became the symbol of the law of God in its fulness. They were the emblem of the Divine revelation which through the ages has been the source of noble civilisation, of moral excellence, and religious comfort to the world.

“And bells of gold between them round about.” Endless speculation has been indulged in by both Jewish and Christian commentators as to the appearance and number of these bells. Early tradition places the number at seventy-two, but in early Christian times they were reckoned to be three hundred and sixty-five. As to their appearance really nothing can be ascertained. Josephus dwells upon their beauty, but does not gratify curiosity as to their form or size. There are a few small golden bells in the British Museum shaped almost like a pomegranate, about an inch in diameter and an inch and a half in length, which have been brought from the ruins of Egypt or Nineveh, which in default of other evidence may be taken to represent their probable appearance. The important question to us, however, is, why they were to be worn. As to their purpose, it is clearly stated, Ex. 28³⁵: “And it shall be upon Aaron to minister: and the sound thereof shall be heard when he goeth in unto the Holy Place before the Lord, and when he cometh out.” On the Day of Atonement the High Priest put on his garments of glory and beauty, including, of course, the robe with its golden bells. In these he performed the morning sacrifice in the Holy Place. The tinkling of the bells informed the

people of his approach and warned them from coming near to the Holy Place, as it was commanded. Lev. 16¹⁷, "And there shall be no man in the tent of meeting when he goeth in to make atonement in the Holy Place." Then he put off his robes of beauty, and arrayed in the white linen priestly garments performed his awfully solemn duties, as already described (Chapter X.), in the Holy of Holies, putting on, when these were finished, his rich vestments, with the bells ringing as the signal of his approach and entrance into the Holy Place once more. Thus the bells warned off the priests from the Holy Place during the High Priest's entrance into the Holiest; they announced to the people when solemn preparations for presenting the blood of atonement and holy intercession were being made; and, above all, when the great priestly functions were concluded, the bells rang their welcome peal, signifying that the glad tidings of a full salvation were made known to all the people.

Thus the bells were a testimony against unrighteousness. As their sound was heard all were warned off from the Holy Place. The atonement for sin was about to be offered and presented, and the sinner must stand afar off. They were a call to repentance, for they testified eloquently as to the exceeding evil of sin which

shut man out from the Divine presence and fellowship, and of the need of deepest humiliation in the sight of God. They were also a message of gladness. It is not easy for us to realise the satisfaction that stirred the hearts of the multitudes gathered on the Day of Atonement when the bells of the High Priest announced that the solemn ceremonies of the day were over and that God was merciful and reconciled to His people. The bells were thus a symbol of the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which is a constant witness against all sin and unrighteousness, an unceasing call to repentance and holiness, and a death knell to sorrow and despair.

CHAPTER VIII
THE HIGH PRIEST AND HIS
VESTMENTS
PART II

CHAPTER VIII

THE HIGH PRIEST AND HIS VESTMENTS

(PART II)

THE white linen garments of Aaron and the girdle symbolised the priestly functions which appertained to his position, the robe of the ephod represented the divineness and fruitfulness of the law and testimony given by Moses to the people. There were also the ephod, the breastplate, and the crown, which formed parts of the investiture of the High Priest and which require to be noticed. These typified his office as the ruler and judge of the people. The ephod was a shoulder piece and is thus described: "They shall make the ephod of gold, of blue and purple, scarlet, and fine twined linen, the work of the cunning workman. It shall have the two shoulder pieces joined to the two ends thereof, that it may be joined together. And the cunningly woven band which is upon it, to gird it on withal, shall be like the work

thereof and of the same piece" (Ex. 28⁶⁻⁸). Two onyx or beryl stones were to be taken, and the names of six of the tribes were to be engraved on each; then one stone was to be fastened to each shoulder piece of the ephod, "and Aaron shall bear the names before the Lord upon his shoulder for a memorial" (ver. 12). In all ancient nations the shoulder was the seat of rule. Of the Messiah it was predicted: "The government shall be upon His shoulder" (Isa. 9⁶). "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon His shoulder" (Isa. 22²²). The ephod, as being specifically a shoulder dress, emblemised the authority with which the High Priest was invested.

The breastplate was fastened upon the ephod. It was commanded to be made four square, as the noblest things are often described as being, notably the Holiest of All in the temple, and the City of the New Jerusalem. "And the city lieth four square, and the length thereof is as great as the breadth" (Rev. 21¹⁶). It measured about ten inches each way, and was made of the finest yarn. The threads were dyed blue, purple, and scarlet, and with each linen thread was twisted a thread of gold. It was folded double so as to be sufficiently strong to bear the weight of the precious stones it was to contain. These stones

were twelve in number, and each one was engraved with the name of one of the tribes of Israel. At each corner of the breastplate a golden ring was fastened, and on the upper side of the piece, just on the border, was a small golden chain which ran like an edging of lace along the top. This was brought through the rings at the corners and connected the breastplate with the loops of gold which were in the shoulder pieces of the ephod. At the lower side there was also an edging chain carried through the rings at the ends, by which it was fastened to the embroidered girdle which was round the waist of the High Priest. It was called "the breastplate of judgement"; "and Aaron shall wear the breastplate of judgement upon his heart when he goeth into the Holy Place" (Ex. 28²⁹). By the Jews the heart was reckoned as the seat of judgement. They were not metaphysicians, they were not practised to scientific exactness in the use of terms. Their language was not framed for such a purpose. It was a perfect instrument for the expression of religious fervour and sublime poetry, but it had not the fine discriminations of meaning which made the Greek tongue so perfect an instrument of philosophical exposition. With the Jew the heart was more than the seat of

the emotions and affections. It was also used to express the understanding, and was the seat of wisdom. Therefore Solomon prayed: "Give Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people." And God replied: "Because thou hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgement . . . I have given thee an understanding heart" (1 Kings 3⁹⁻¹²). The laying of the breastplate upon the heart of the High Priest signified his endowment with the function and the needful gifts for acting as a judge over Israel. Thus its name as "the breastplate of judgement." Thus was symbolised before the nation the Great High Priest, of whom it was prophesied: "He shall judge Thy people with righteousness and Thy poor with judgement" (Ps. 72²). "With righteousness shall He judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth" (Isa. 11⁴).

Another purpose of the breastplate was to assure the members of Israel of the perfect sympathy of their priest with every member of the commonwealth. In the Canticles, the Spouse cries to the Bridegroom, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart." The prayer has its fulfilment in the appearance of the Lord Jesus before the throne as the representative of His people, where "He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

When Aaron appeared in the Holy Place the names of the tribes sparkled in the lustre of the precious gems he wore in the breastplate, and it rose and fell with every palpitation of his heart as he stood before the Lord as their intercessor. In all this the living sympathy of the Lord Jesus Christ was typified, who bears on His heart the names of His members. *Names*: how much they signify! When the name of an individual is mentioned how there rises before the mind all that belongs to the man: his appearance, dress, peculiarities, qualities, and capabilities! So the High Priest bore the names of Israel before the Lord; so Christ says of His people as being of more value than the sparrow of the street: "Not one of them is forgotten before God."

There was one important and mysterious arrangement as to the breastplate, concerning which it is difficult to form a definite opinion. This is the instruction given to Moses: "And thou shalt put in the breastplate of judgement the Urim and the Thummim; and they shall be upon Aaron's heart when he goeth in before the Lord: and Aaron shall bear the judgement of the children of Israel upon his heart before the Lord continually" (Ex. 28³⁰). From other Scriptures we gather that from the constitution of

the Jewish system under Moses, unto the endowment of the prophetic office as an authoritative exponent of the Divine counsel, the Urim and Thummim were the medium through which God made known His will to Israel in matters of national gravity or obscurity. Thus in the all-important matter of appointing a successor to Moses, the command given was, that Joshua should stand before the congregation: "And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgement of the Urim before the Lord" (Num. 27²¹). What the Urim and Thummim were is not explained, but the way in which they are mentioned in the Pentateuch shows that they were perfectly familiar to the people of those times.

There is not much difficulty in ascertaining the meaning of the words Urim and Thummim, but this does not materially aid us in reaching a decided conclusion. The marginal reading in the Revised Version gives the interpretation as being "Lights and Perfections," and this is as accurate a meaning as can be obtained. Some expositors have tried to combine the meaning of the two terms by the phrase, "perfect illumination," which expresses their idea with tolerable correctness.

There have been more speculations concerning

the nature of the Urim and Thummim than can be tabulated, some of which have been so grotesque as to be their own refutation. Reasonable expositors have generally been divided into two classes. One of these advocates the idea that the precious stones of the breastplate formed the Urim and Thummim, and that when the will or counsel of Jehovah was made known on any subject it was either by a brilliant illumination of the stones or by an audible voice speaking to the High Priest as he stood in the Holy Place. The other class holds that the Urim and Thummim were stones or small figures which were placed in the folds of the breastplate, and that from these the Divine Oracle in some way made known His mind. It must be confessed that the former opinion is held by a majority of both ancient and modern writers. Josephus, who, however, cannot be reckoned a very reliable authority, says that the Urim and Thummim consisted of the twelve precious stones and also of the two onyx stones upon the High Priest's shoulders. He declares that these stones on occasions shone out with such intense brilliance as to be seen by a whole army when about to march. Many who take this first view say that probably the Divine Will was made known by a successive illumination of the letters in the

names of the twelve tribes engraved upon the gems. This theory is invalidated by the fact that the names do not contain all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. To patch up the opinion several ingenious contrivances are suggested, the nature of which show the weakness of the theory. A more consistent opinion is, that if the stones of the breastplate were illuminated by supernatural brightness, the mind of the High Priest received at the same time a Divine afflatus which enabled him to declare the mind of God concerning the subject on which His counsel was sought.

The great objection to this theory is that the Urim and Thummim were commanded to be "put IN the breastplate" at certain times and in special needs. The command as to the gems was: "Thou shalt set in it settings of stones, four rows of stones . . . they shall be inclosed in gold in their settings" (Ex. 28¹⁷⁻²⁰). This indicates that the stones were an integral portion of the breastplate. But as to the Urim and Thummim, they were to be placed "*in*" the breastplate for certain times, and when the High Priest entered the Holy Place. Thus: "And he placed the breastplate upon him, and *in* the breastplate he put the Urim and Thummim" (Lev. 8⁸). This seems to indicate that while

the twelve precious stones were an integral part of the breastplate, the Urim and Thummim were movable additions to it. The precious stones were not *in* the breastplate but upon it. The preposition *el* signifies *in* or *within*, as, *e.g.*, "Thou shalt put *into* the Ark the testimony" (Ex. 25¹⁷). The same word is used in each case; and as the tables were within the Ark, the Urim and Thummim were in the breastplate. Either they must have been placed within its folds or a pocket must have been contrived for their reception. On the whole, then, though with much deference to the learned men who have sustained the theory, the idea that the precious stones formed the Urim and Thummim must be rejected.

As to the second theory, viz. that it consisted of small ancient stones or figures, which were placed within the breastplate, much diversity of opinion exists also within this class of expositors as to the *modus operandi* of the Divine Oracle. Of these some insist that there were three stones, which were used as lots by the High Priest, one representing *Yea*, the second *Nay*, and the third a neutral decision. Others believe that they were two small figures which symbolised the two leading virtues, truth and manifestation. In support of this latter idea it is pointed out

that the Egyptians, among whom the Israelites had dwelt for several generations, had small images from whom their priests or judges sought inspiration. In corroboration of this view, little images have been found in tombs in Egypt in which supreme judges were buried, and ancient writers testify that such officials wore on their breasts small figures representing truth and justice. This theory seems at first sight to clash with the second commandment; but it must be remembered that if the Urim and Thummim were images, they were not images of the Divine Being, but symbolic representations of great virtues, as the cherubim upon the Ark were symbolic figures. Nor were the Urim and Thummim to be worshipped, but to be consulted by the High Priest in times of need. On the other hand, it must be remembered that the words Urim and Thummim do not mean truth, or justice, or revelation, but "lights and perfections." Probably the words were chosen to remind the people of their sacred relationship and their awful responsibility to maintain a course of absolute holiness. If images were the form of the Urim and Thummim, it is strange that Moses received no command as to their manufacture. Everything else was specifically described, and minute instructions given as to its

style and pattern, but nothing of the kind is said as to these symbols, as they are referred to as though they were already in existence and familiar to Israel. The images of the Egyptians were worn by the judges continually as insignia of office, but the Urim and Thummim were only to be worn by the High Priest when he went in before the Lord.

On the whole, the precise form of the Urim and Thummim must remain in obscurity, nor is it of importance that we should know whether they were small figures of wrought gold or carved stone or ivory, or whether they were gems of ancient date and fabulous value. In either case they would be equally suitable for their purpose.

We may with equal safety reject the idea that the Urim and Thummim were used by the High Priest as lots, or dice which were drawn or thrown to show the will of God. The lot was used in several instances by the Divine command in the history of Israel, but only in matters of inferior importance, such as choosing between the goats on the Day of Atonement or the portions of land which were to fall to the various tribes. But in no matter involving great moral issues or national policy was the lot employed. These were reserved for decision by the Urim

and Thummim, and it would have been a degradation of first things to have decided them by a method concerning which no solemn or sacred sentiment existed. On the whole, it is also safe to reject the idea that the Oracle gave counsel by a flashing forth of dazzling brightness such as Josephus describes. The Urim and Thummim were *in* the breastplate, and there is nothing to show that they were ever publicly exhibited to the people. They were symbols of awful sacredness on a level with those behind the veil in the Holiest. If they flashed at all it must have been to the vision of the High Priest only "when he stood before the Lord." But this theory has no evidence of a satisfactory kind to support it.

On the whole, the view advocated among others by Dr. Plumptre, appears to be the most probable as well as the most consonant with Divine methods and the great spiritual issues in question. He suggests that when the Lord was "to be inquired of" by the Urim and Thummim, the High Priest gazing on these symbols was elevated above all partialities and disturbing influences, that he rose indeed into prophetic rapture, and under the influence of a noble spiritual insight was enabled to know and declare the mind of Jehovah upon the subject involved.

Such an afflatus was temporary and extended only to the matter then requiring decision.

In the course of ages, the dispensation of the Urim and Thummim died out. The people were not content with their ancient oracle; they rebelled against God, and demanded a king after the fashion of the Gentile nations around them. They had their desire, and in having it, sealed their eventual destruction as a nation. They no longer "inquired of the Lord," but in His mercy and long-suffering they were not left without the testimony of His will and counsel. A brilliant line of inspired prophets arose, who for a long time stood as witnesses for righteousness and purity, and who bore swift testimony against national vice and declension. But in the picture here presented of the High Priest, under Divine influence uttering infallible direction and counsel, we have symbolised the "Priest upon the throne," concerning whom it is written: "Thou shalt call His name Counsellor," and who said concerning Himself: "The Father hath given all judgement unto the Son: that all may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."

CHAPTER IX

THE SEVEN-BRANCHED LAMP STAND

CHAPTER IX

THE SEVEN-BRANCHED LAMP STAND

THE Holy Place in the tabernacle and the temple was the depository of several most important and significant symbols, of which the Seven - Branched Lamp Stand, commonly but erroneously called the Golden Candlestick, claims principal attention.

It stood near the beautiful veil in the Holy Place, and on the southern side. The directions given as to its construction were minutely detailed, and yet as to its height, supposed by some to be five feet, or precise dimensions, no information whatever is afforded. Various opinions have been given as to whether the seven lamps were all on a plane or in pyramidal form, and as to whether the Candlestick, to adopt the usual expression, was so low in height as to be lighted from the floor of the Holy Place, or so high as to require the use of steps by the priest; but no definite decision can be arrived at

on these points, and it is matter for satisfaction that they do not affect the essential question as to the signification of the symbol.

As described in the Books of Exodus and Leviticus, in the centre of the Candlestick was an upright stem or shaft, and from it branched out six arms, three on each side, so as to present with the centre one seven lights. Each of these was hollowed at the top so that each held a lamp. It was made of pure beaten gold and was covered with carefully wrought ornament. According to some writers, the golden shaft terminated downwards in three feet, or roots, and mystic ornaments, consisting of blossoms, fruit buds, and lilies were set upon the seven arms; so that it may be concluded that the general appearance of the Candlestick was that of a tree with roots, stem, trunk, branches, foliage, blossoms, and buds, with the golden burning lamps as its glorious fruit. It was one of the especial duties of the High Priest to see that the lamps were regularly filled with the purest olive oil, and that the wicks should be carefully trimmed, so that the lights might burn with distinct clearness.

There is a difference of opinion amongst expositors as to whether the lights were kept burning both night and day. If we judge simply

by the testimony of Scripture, it must be decided that the lamps were not lighted during the day: "Thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause a lamp to burn continually in the tent of meeting, without the veil which is before the testimony; Aaron and his sons shall order it from evening to morning before the Lord" (Ex. 27^{20, 21}). With this compare the command as to the trimming of the lamps: "And Aaron shall burn thereon" (the golden altar) "incense of sweet spices: every morning when he dresseth the lamps he shall burn it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn it; a perpetual incense before the Lord" (Ex. 30^{7, 8}). The command to keep the lamps burning "from evening to morning" was reiterated to Moses (Lev. 24⁴), and when the Lord called to the boy Samuel in the temple, we read: "The lamp of God was not yet gone out" (1 Sam. 3³). It is true that Josephus says that the custom was to keep the lamps burning night and day, but in the last days of the Mosaic ritual the Jews had superadded many observances and ceremonies for which there was no Divine sanction. Indeed, they, and many other religionists, have often multiplied forms and ritual in proportion as vital godliness

and true spirituality have died out from their hearts.

In the tabernacle in the wilderness there was only one Golden Candlestick, but in the temple built by Solomon there were ten, all of the same form and value. This was done simply to add to the splendour of the Holy Place. These were carried away into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar and never afterwards recovered. In the second temple, built by Zerubbabel, there was a return to the simplicity of the tabernacle, and only one Candlestick was placed therein, which stood shedding its radiance on the veil and the furnishings of the Holy Place until the sack of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple by Titus. He carried the symbolic relic to Rome, and on the magnificent triumphal arch erected to his honour there is carved a fine representation of this beautiful ornament. It is not certain, nor even very probable, that this carving represents the form either of the original Candlestick or of those in the first temple, because experts assure us that the style of the base of the ornament is purely pagan, and of a later date than that of the building of either the Tent of Meeting or the temple. Probably, therefore, the Candlestick prepared by Zerubbabel had been fashioned in part after a style used in the

Assyrian Empire. It had various fortunes after being carried to Rome by Titus. It stood for a few centuries in one of the heathen temples or the royal palaces, until Genseric swept like a destroying tornado over the city and carried it with much other treasure into Africa. In the sixth century Belisarius recovered and conveyed it to Constantinople. Then accounts of its subsequent destination vary. One writer affirms that it was conveyed back to Jerusalem and stood as an honoured relic in the Christian Church there; but others say, and this is much more likely to be true, that it was conveyed back to Rome, where it remained until the great city was looted by the Northern Barbarians, when it was cast into the yellow waters of the Tiber, and was no more seen. It was better so. It had for long ages symbolised great truths, and had been long superseded by the great realities it represented. Better immeasurably that it should be lost or destroyed than that the idolatrous Church of Rome should have preserved it to become an object of worship or a source of immense revenue.

It is now of importance to consider the meaning of this beautiful and striking ornament. Generally speaking, it may be said that the Golden Candlestick symbolised the Church of

Christ, especially as to its unity, its preciousness, and its glorious mission.

That the Church was thus symbolised is made plain by the vision beheld by John in Patmos, and its subsequent explanation: "I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto a Son of Man . . . and He had in His right hand seven stars . . . the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are seven churches" (Rev. 1¹². 13. 16. 20). But the Church must be filled and be aglow with the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit, as is taught by the commands concerning the lamps being filled with "pure olive oil," oil being throughout the old dispensation symbolic of the Holy Ghost. The vision of Zechariah illustrates this truth in a remarkable manner: "I have seen, and, behold, a candlestick all of gold, with its bowl upon the top of it, and its seven lamps thereon; there are seven pipes to each of the lamps which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees by it. . . . This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. 4². 3. 6). Thus is represented the Church as the Golden Candlestick and the Holy Spirit's grace in the current of oil flowing into it from the contiguous olive

trees. That the Holy Spirit is thus symbolised by the shining lamplight is showed by the second vision seen by John: "Out of the throne proceed lightnings and voices and thunders, and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God" (Rev. 4⁵). The seven Spirits of God being of course the Holy Spirit, source of light and energy to the Church of Christ.

The word rendered candlestick in the Book of the Revelation is *luchnia*, a lamp stand, and, as such, is given in the margin of the Revised Version. In this case the translators showed too little boldness in giving a correct rendering, as in others they showed a little too much. A candlestick, as understood in England, was an unknown article in ancient times, and lamps were little known to the early translators of the Bible. The candlestick was then in general use, and to the English mind of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries expressed tolerably well the sense of the sacred text; but the last revisers would have done excellent service if they had replaced the term candlestick by the correct word, lamp stand. The Church is a glorious lamp stand; it is the Body of Him who is the "Light of the world," and as such it "holds forth the word of life."

This symbol of the Church was ordained with such care and detail that it is interesting to trace its full significance.

(a) It was intended to symbolise the unity of the Church. There were seven lamps, but it was one lamp stand. "They are many members, but one body" (1 Cor. 12²⁰). There are many denominations, but only "One Holy Catholic Church." There may be many sheep-folds, but only one flock. As Jesus Himself declared: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd" (John 10¹⁶). The oneness of the Candlestick was constituted by the several branches being united in one shaft or stem, and the several parts of the Church form one Body by being compacted in one living Head. This Church gathers into lasting and real fellowship the holy and faithful of all ages; it overrides all national or geographical limits; it reckons naught of sectarian shibboleths; it condemns class or caste distinctions; it is superior to all artificial conventionalities, but receives with impartial welcome all who "do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God." Its declaration is that of Peter: "Of a truth I perceive God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth

Him and worketh righteousness is acceptable to Him" (Acts 10³⁵).

This Church is comprehensive beyond the idea of any party or sect. It gathers into communion alike Moses the prophet and Job the Emir, Elisha and Naaman, Joshua and Rahab, Peter and Cornelius. How many meek, humble, contemplative souls in ancient lands, who, in simple faith, have risen above the idol and the symbol, resting with childlike simplicity in an infinite love that "will not quench the smoking flax nor break the bruised reed," cannot even be surmised, but Scripture avers them to be "an innumerable multitude."

The Church is One, because it preserves an unbroken union with its eternal Head. Christ is the ever-present and living power which holds and compacts in Himself every member, all of whom "grow up in all things into Him, which is the Head, even Christ; from whom all the Body fitly framed and knit together . . . maketh the increase of the Body unto the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4¹⁶). Thus it is the apprehension and appropriation of Christ as "All and in All" that links the believer with the Church and preserves its unbroken continuity from age to age. The truth of Christ may have been more distinctly articulated, more adequately

comprehended, more consciously experienced at one time than another, but that truth has been the faith of the Church all down the long generations. It was so in the first century, and is so in the dawn of the twentieth; in the University lecture-room and in the hut of the peasant; in the subtle contemplations of schoolman or mystic and the childlike conceptions of the lowly and unlearned. It glows alike in the letters of Paul, the visions of John, the confessions of Augustine, the flaming testimonies of Athanasius, the sermons of Tauler, the meditations of À Kempis, the commentaries of Luther, the allegories of Bunyan, the treatises of Jeremy Taylor, the seraphic songs of Ken and Keble, of Watts and Wesley, the poetry of Cowper and Tennyson. It is everywhere the same Jesus, redeeming the man, purifying his nature, inspiring his tongue, and making him a partaker of the Divine nature.

(b) The Golden Candlestick also symbolised the preciousness of the Church. It was to be manufactured of solid beaten gold, no dross, no alloy to be mingled with it, and it was to be covered with rich decoration. It was to weigh one talent or about 125 pounds, and was probably worth from five to six thousand pounds sterling. Its ornaments are described as

blossoms, knops, and flowers. Josephus, who had probably seen the Candlestick which stood in Herod's temple, says that they consisted of leaves, lilies, and pomegranates, which was probably the case. Thus were indicated the intrinsic value, the spiritual beauty, and the abundant fruitfulness of the Church.

The wealth and glory of the universe are concentrated in the Church. It is the depository of the truth and wisdom of the Godhead ; it has been the scene of the most astounding revelations of the Divine nature and character—

The first archangel never saw
So much of God before ;

it gathers into its history and *personnel* the hosts and hierarchies of heaven, and all the spiritual aristocracy of earth ; the greatest agencies and instrumentalities of the universe have been used for its establishment and in its preservation ; it has been the birthplace and nursing-ground of the great makers of history and the noblest leaders of the race. Other institutions have sometimes one name of superlative influence attached to them, but the Church enrols names like Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, Paul, John, Chrysostom, Aquinas, Bernard, Wycliffe, Milton, and Wesley, with myriads more of almost equal

rank. This was the great purpose of the Redeemer: "To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be known, *through the Church*, the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3¹⁰).

The beauty of the Church corresponds to its preciousness. The Candlestick was covered with ornamental decoration, and the Church is radiant and glorious with every grace and virtue that can inhere in or belong to either a Divine or human character. The marvels of church history, the achievements of its heroes, the purity of its saints, the lofty elevation of its teachers, leaders, and poets, the patience of its sufferers, the steadfastness of its martyrs, the triumph of its sons when dying, redeem the history of the world from utter blackness and shame, and form objects for observation and subjects for study whereby hope and gladness may be inspired into every human heart.

The Candlestick represented the fruitfulness of the Church. It has a marvellous power of propagation and self-multiplication; it sheds its influence and scatters its blessings over the great world of humanity, and bears all manner of fruits for the healing of the nations. It has announced lofty principles of philosophy and raised a pure standard of morals; it has driven

out from human nature abominable corruptions ; “instead of the thorn has come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier the myrtle tree,” and “the wilderness has rejoiced and blossomed as the rose.”

(c) One more important matter the Golden Candlestick testified, viz. the mission of the Church. The lamps were to be lighted in the evening and were to burn till the morning. But why? There were no dark vigils or midnight ceremonies in the Jewish Church such as the Church of Rome has practised. There were no duties requiring the attention of the priesthood during the solemn darkness. But the great duty and mission of God's Church was to be adumbrated by an impressive symbol. Therefore the light shone in the darkness as the Church should shine amidst the thick darkness of sin, to bear witness of the light and to “hold forth the word of life.”

It is the great mission of the Church to diffuse the light, to disperse the moral darkness of error, superstition, sin, and corruption. The Head of the Church says, “I am the Light of the World” (Jno. 8¹²), and then addressing His people He says, “Ye are the lights of the world” (Matt. 5¹⁶). So also St. Paul: “Once ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the

Lord" (Eph. 5^s). The light must shine, it must shed its beams around. It steals, in the early dawn, over the face of nature, and the darkness flies, the earth is clothed with brightness, it is revived, it glows with fresh warmth and beauty. So is the Church in a world darkened by guilt and shame; like the majestic lighthouse which stands at the gates of the Atlantic, rising from its foundation of rock, sending its beacon blaze over the troubled waters so long as the night endures, and bearing on its base an inscription which exactly describes the mission of the Church, "to give light and to save life."

The Candlestick was so placed in the Holy Place as to cast its lights upon the golden altar and the golden table of incense. It is the mission of the Church to act so as to reveal to a sinful humanity the all-meritorious and efficacious sacrifice, and the prevalent intercession of its gracious Lord and Head. This is the supreme need of this generation, and it is when most of all the Church proclaims in clear and unmistakable manner these glorious truths that it is most successful. If in these times it will rouse itself and cry as of olden time, "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness and

the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth," the voice which is sweet and full as that of many waters will speak to us from the high throne of the universe and say, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is arisen upon thee."

CHAPTER X

THE ALTAR OF INCENSE

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THE Holiest Place in the tabernacle and temple was in a special sense the shrine of the Deity, where His glory was revealed and the highest truths of religion were adumbrated. The Holy Place represented the human side. It was the sphere where the frequently recurring duties of the priesthood, as representing the congregation, were performed and observed. The furnishings of the apartment had immediate reference to the services and duties of the people as rendered through their human but divinely appointed mediators.

The Golden Candlestick has been already enlarged upon, and it is fitting, in view of the dawn of the new century and of the great national, simultaneous, evangelistic missions which have, it is to be hoped, inaugurated a new era of united and aggressive action on the part of the churches, that something should be said

about the Altar of Incense, which stood as an interesting symbol in the Holy Place.

The Altar of Incense differed essentially in its meaning from the brazen Altar of Sacrifice which stood in the forecourt of the tabernacle. That was the chief medium of communication between sinful men and the righteous God. Its arrangement, its uses, and its design, all were ordered to this end, and in every respect it symbolised the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. But the Altar of Incense had an utterly different signification.

It stood close to and in front of the beautiful veil which divided the Holiest from the Holy Place. "Thou shalt put it before the veil that is by the Ark of the Testimony, before the Mercy Seat that is over the Testimony, where I will meet with thee" (Ex. 30⁶). It was to be placed as near the Ark as possible without being in the Holiest. It was therefore called "the Altar that is before the Lord" (Lev. 16¹⁸), *i.e.* in close association with the place where the Shekinah displayed its brightness. The directions given as to its structure were carefully minute. It was to be built of acacia wood, but covered entirely with plates of gold. It stood about forty-two inches in height and was twenty-one inches square at the top. It had a railing or crown of

gold at the top and a projection, or "horn," at each corner. It was called the "Golden Altar," to distinguish it from the Brazen Altar on which the sacrifices were offered. It had two rings at the sides, into which staves might be put when it had to be transported from place to place. The object of the altar is clearly put: "Thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon" (Ex. 30¹). It was not to be used for the offering of sacrifice, and yet it was to be associated with the Altar of Sacrifice. Fire had to be kindled upon it, and which was not to be allowed to die out, but the kindling fire had to be brought from the Altar of Sacrifice. The four horns at the corners were to be sprinkled with the blood of the sin offering on the great Day of Atonement: "He shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it seven times, and cleanse and hallow it" (Lev. 16^{18, 19}). This association with the Altar of Sacrifice is significant. Any fire used for kindling save that from the Brazen Altar was called "strange fire," and rendered the incense offered unholy. The sons of Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu committed the sin of using unhallowed fire, and "fire came forth from the Lord and devoured them" (Lev. 10¹⁻⁴).

The explanation of the judgement was in the Divine words: "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people I will be glorified." If the priest was to represent at once God to man and man to God, he must to the very letter obey the Divine command.

This double association of the two altars distinctly indicated that the virtue and efficacy of the Altar of Incense depended upon the sacrificial and atoning element connected with the Brazen Altar. Upon the Golden Altar was to be placed a brazier or incense pot, filled with burning coals, upon which was scattered morning and evening the sacred incense, to send forth the smoke and fragrance of which was the sole purpose of the institution.

The ingredients of the incense were commanded to be of equal parts of frankincense, stacte, onycha, and galbanum. The frankincense was the most important of the aromatic gums. It was more precious than any other, save myrrh, and was directly associated with sacred service. It was obtained from South Arabia, but most likely it had been imported there from India by the Sabæans. The tree grows still in the highlands of India, and is called *Salai*. This gum is quite different from the frankincense of modern

commerce, which is the resin of the spruce pine and the fir.

The stacte is generally supposed to be the gum of the storax tree, found in Syria and adjacent countries. Probably this was the gum known as benzoin, which is still much used for ecclesiastical incense, and is the product of a storax which grows in the Straits Settlements. The onycha it is difficult to identify. The word in Greek was used of the onyx stone and of a shell. Pliny speaks of a shell called onyx which was used as a perfume and as a medicine. This might have been the ingredient called onycha in the Old Testament, but it is not possible to be definite. The galbanum is a well-known substance, although the plant from which it comes is carefully concealed from general knowledge. It comes from India and Africa, and is a gum of yellowish brown colour which emits a strange smell, not agreeable in itself, but specially so when combined with other odours.

These materials were to be carefully compounded, and the Divine command was: "Thou shalt make of it a perfume after the art of the perfumer, seasoned with salt, pure and holy" (Ex. 30³⁵). The salt was the consecrating element in the offering. This compound was only to be used in the Holy Place and on the

Golden Altar, save when a portion was taken in the golden censer by the High Priest into the Holiest on the Day of Atonement. If any man prepared incense after this recipe and used it for any other purpose he was to be cut off from among the people.

The preparation of the incense was a solemn work. There were golden mortars and pestles placed contiguous to the Holy Place in which the ingredients were placed, and certain of the priests were employed in carefully pounding them until they were of an even consistency and equally mixed. Then half a pound of the mixture was placed upon the burning coals each morning and half a pound in the evening, and thus the sweet incense went up, filling the house with fragrance and symbolising a perpetual service of the Lord's people.

The position of the Golden Altar in the Holy Place and close to the Mercy Seat indicated that it had to do with man's inner spiritual life and had relation to Divine fellowship and intercourse. The plating of gold upon the substratum of acacia wood, the ornamental border of gold round the top, and the express limitation of the sacred incense to it, are all significant of the honourable service for which the altar was erected.

The unbroken offering of incense night and day in the near presence of the Ark and the Shekinah, and the offering of it in the Holiest on the Day of Atonement, was meant to symbolise the "fervent effectual prayers of the righteous," which arose before God, fragrant and acceptable to Him. That the people understood the teaching of the symbol may be shown by observing the arrangement for the presentation of the incense upon the altar. At the morning and evening sacrifice, after the victim had been slain upon the Brazen Altar and all the ceremony connected therewith had been fulfilled, the lot was cast for the priest who had to minister at the Golden Altar. No one could perform the duty who had done it before except in the case, very rare, that all the priests present had performed the work. The man chosen selected two assistants, and the three went to the Brazen Altar. One man filled with incense a golden censer, held in a silver vessel, and another filled a golden bowl with "live" coals from the altar. As they passed to the Holy Place, they struck a musical instrument, a kind of rude organ, on hearing which the priests and Levites hastened from all parts to worship, while the people who had come to be purified were assembled at the gate of Nicanor. The three officials ascended

into the Holy Place; one of them spread the coals upon the Golden Altar, another arranged the incense, and the chief was then left alone before the altar, waiting for a signal before burning the incense. This pause in the proceedings is probably referred to in connection with Zacharias: "His lot was to enter into the temple" (*naos*, the Holy Place) "of the Lord to offer incense. And the whole multitude were praying without at the hour of incense" (Luke 1⁹. 10). When the signal was given and the priest scattered the incense on the burning coals, the people, having withdrawn from the inner court, fell before the Lord, with hands outspread, and engaged in silent prayer. During this solemn silence, which prevailed throughout the whole structure, the incense was kindled and the cloud of rich fragrance rose before God and filled the sanctuary.¹

David evidently regarded the burning incense as symbolical of prayer. "Let my prayer be set forth as incense before Thee, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Ps. 141²). The imagery of Isaiah's vision of the Divine Glory was evidently inspired by this

¹ Full description of the service may be found in Dr. Edersheim's *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*, pp. 137, etc.

prostration in prayer at the kindling of the incense. After the seraphim had offered the ascriptions to the Holy Lord, "the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of Him who cried, and the house was filled with smoke" (Isa. 6⁴).

References to this symbol are further found in the New Testament. In the marvellous vision of the court of heaven, the Exile of Patmos saw the four glorious cherubim, representing the perfect creaturehood of the universe, and the twenty-four presbyters, representing the redeemed of earth and heaven, in close proximity to the throne, "having golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of saints" (Rev. 5⁸). In another vision the apostle refers to the same great fact, to which reference will be made farther on.

By this exquisitely fitting picture was the efficacy and power of prayer before God represented to the ancient Church. Under no symbolic form could the truth have been presented more delightfully. The sweetest odours of rare plants and flowers exhaled, rising up in fragrant clouds, before God, and representing the noblest aspirations of saintly souls or the ardent longings of penitent sinners. So the value, the power, the graciousness of prayer, with all it teaches as to

the tenderness and mercy of the Eternal Father, was presented to the minds of the people continuously in this beautiful symbol. To the Christian Church the same truth is emphasised in the vision of the Apocalypse, John having his mind quickened to interpret the picture beheld in the symbol of the temple, glorified and emphasised by the golden bowls held by cherubim and presbyters, in the upper sanctuary, and in which was the burning incense, "the prayers of saints."

The aged exile had a further revelation as to this great symbol. In a subsequent vision he beheld a great angel standing before God, and near the altar, holding a golden censer in his hand. "There was given to him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the Golden Altar which was before the throne" (Rev. 8³). The smoke of the incense filled the court, and the angel, taking the censer, filled it with the fire of the altar and then emptied it out upon the earth. "Then there followed thunders, and voices, and lightnings, and earthquakes."

The censer of the Lord is being filled with prayers. From all parts of the United Kingdom, from the great Dominion of Canada, from all parts of the United States, from Australasia,

from many parts of the Continent, and in the missions of the heathen world, there are millions of souls ardently interceding with God for a new Pentecost which shall embrace the world, and that the new century may from its commencement be signalised by a great evangelistic advance on the part of the Churches, which shall result in the mobilisation of the whole Church, in the conversion of many myriads of souls, in a great National Reformation, and in the near approach of the universal kingdom of peace and righteousness. This *must* all be realised if the Church will persevere in its intercessions. God will work; He will pour out thunders to arouse and alarm, voices to instruct and guide, lightnings to destroy the wickedness of men, earthquakes to overturn the habitations of cruelty and wrong.

CHAPTER XI

THE TABLE OF SHEWBREAD

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ONE more symbol of great interest was contained in the Holy Place, the precise significance of which has been the subject of much controversy. This was the Golden Table, on which were placed every Sabbath day twelve cakes of unleavened bread, called in our translation the "shewbread."

This table stood on the right hand in the Holy Place. It was made of acacia wood, but so overlaid with thin plates of gold as to be called the Golden Table. It was two cubits long, one broad, and one and a half high. It had four feet, which, in the representation sculptured on the Arch of Titus at Rome, are turned outwards and carved after the feet of animals. A plate of gold stretched round the table from one leg to another about half-way from the top. Another plate or edge of gold ran round the top of the table, and this was surmounted by an

ornamental crown or wreaths. This was clearly expressed: "And thou shalt make unto it a border of an handbreadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about" (Ex. 25²⁵). This rim or crown which was uppermost was intended to prevent anything falling from it. Rings were placed in the legs, through which carrying poles might be placed. Several utensils were commanded to be prepared for it: "Thou shalt make the dishes thereof, and the spoons thereof, and the flagons thereof, and the bowls thereof to pour out withal: of pure gold shalt thou make them. And thou shalt set upon the table shewbread before Me alway" (Ex. 25^{29, 30}). "And put thereon the dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and the cups to pour out withal: and the continual bread shall be thereon" (Num. 4⁷). "And he made the vessels which were upon the table, the dishes thereof, and the bowls thereof, and the flagons thereof, to pour out withal, of pure gold" (Ex. 37¹⁶). There is some obscurity about the nature and uses of these articles. Probably the golden dishes were used to convey the shewbread to and from the table when required; the spoons might be used to scatter the incense upon the burning coals; the flagons are supposed to have been used

for holding wine, which was poured out as libations before God. It should be observed that the word translated "covers" in the A.V. is rendered "flagons" in the R.V. The Rabbis affirm that the "bowls" refer to golden hollow tubes which were placed lengthwise between the cakes of bread to allow air to circulate freely among them and to prevent the process of decay being too rapid. That such golden tubes were used for this purpose is certain, but it is not conclusive that these were the "bowls" referred to. These might be used to hold the incense which was burned upon the table.

Upon the table were placed twelve cakes of unleavened bread, made of the finest wheaten flour, which had been carefully sieved eleven times. These were the shewbread, which, if exactly translated, would be called "face-bread," or "bread of the Presence," as it stood in front of the Holiest Place, where, behind the veil, shone the radiant Shekinah, the visible presence of Jehovah. The bread was prepared in a room dedicated for the purpose in the tabernacle or temple, and was baked the day before the Sabbath. The cakes were placed upon the table in two piles of six each, to correspond with the six names of the tribes, engraved in each of the onyx stones which were worn by the

High Priest upon his shoulders. These cakes were oblong in shape, ten hand-breadths long, five broad, and seven fingers thick. They were turned upwards, two hand-breadths on each side. On the Sabbath the ceremony of placing them was in this fashion: Four priests went into the Holy Place, two of them to carry out the old bread and two to bear out the old dishes of incense. They were followed by four others carrying the cakes, which were to replace the old ones, and the dishes of frankincense, which were to be placed upon the cakes. The first set of priests faced the north, and the others the south; those lifted off the old bread, and at the same moment these put on the new, so that the injunction might be fulfilled that the cakes "should stand before the Lord continually." As the bread was removed the incense was burned before the Lord. The bread was the perquisite of the priests, and was eaten by such of them as were ceremonially clean. The Rabbis say that salt and wine were also placed upon the table. Philo, who was a contemporary of the Lord Jesus, testifies that this was done in his day, and although he was not always reliable, there seems to be no reason to doubt this statement. The salt is named in the Septuagint, and carried with it the idea of consecration;

"with all thine oblations thou shalt offer salt" (Lev. 2¹³). The wine is not specifically mentioned, but is implied in the words, "the flagons to pour out withal." But the "Presence bread" was the chief article on the table; the wine came next, the others were accessories.

In the temple of Solomon there were ten tables placed instead of one: "He made also ten tables and placed them in the temple, five on the right side and five on the left." "And Solomon made . . . the tables also whereon was the shewbread" (2 Chron. 4^{8, 19}). It does not appear, however, that "the bread of the Presence" was placed on more than one table at one time, though it is probable that any of them might be used for the purpose. So we read: "The table whereon was the shewbread was of gold" (1 Kings 7⁴⁸); "We have cleansed the shewbread table with all the vessels thereof" (2 Chron. 29¹⁸). The increase in the number of the tables corresponds with the placing by Solomon of ten lavers and ten golden lamp stands, all of which shows the lavish scale of expenditure which he adopted in the building and furnishing of the temple.

It is worthy of notice that the word rendered "bowls" (*menaqqiyyoth*) does not occur in any part of the Bible save in the three passages

referring to the Golden Table. The several other Hebrew words rendered "bowls" are quite different from this. The *Speaker's Commentary in loco* suggests that it should be rendered "chalices," and we should then read: "The flagons thereof and the chalices thereof to pour out withal" (Ex. 30²⁹). This seems to further confirm the idea referred to above, that libations of wine were offered in connection with the ceremony of the table. This explanation, or the one suggested above, may be adopted at the will of the reader.

The way is now prepared to consider the meaning of this remarkable symbol. The theories of its significance have been many and often unsatisfactory. Some of the suggested meanings have only to be named to be dismissed. The learned Dr. J. Spencer, in his *De Legibus Hebræorum*, and those who followed his lead, taught that the shewbread upon the table, with its accompaniments, was a symbolical meal offered to Jehovah, resembling the *Lectisternium* of the Greeks and Romans, in which images of their gods were placed in reclining posture on couches with tables and viands before them, as if they were partaking of things offered in sacrifice. The explanation offered is too degrading to be accepted in relation to the lofty

spirituality of this ceremony or indeed to any part of Judaism.

The teaching of Bähr that the institution symbolised the spiritual bread by which man may grow into the recognition of God and be nourished in a Divine life does not give the right idea, because the shewbread was an offering received from the people by God, and consecrated to holy uses by their devotion. A somewhat kindred theory has been advocated by the pious Dr. Andrew Bonar and others of his school, to the effect that the cakes symbolised the Person of the Lord Jesus as the Bread of Life; and from this starting-point every evangelical fact and doctrine is ingeniously drawn out from the institution. This is an instance of the interpretation of symbolism running riot. Bread may be an emblematic illustration of Christ, as indeed He Himself used it as such on several occasions; but this does not prove that the "Bread of the Presence" was the appointed symbol of His life imparting presence and grace, and to attempt to read more into a symbol than was intended in its appointment is to weaken the force of its special teaching.

To rightly ascertain the significance of the table and the bread, the forms of expression used in their appointment must be considered.

"Thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth parts of *an ephah* shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the Lord. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be to the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord. Every Sabbath day he shall set it in order before the Lord continually; it is on the behalf of the children of Israel, an everlasting covenant. And it shall be for Aaron and his sons; and they shall eat it in a holy place: for it is most holy unto Him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute" (Lev. 24⁵⁻⁹).

When these commands are analysed, it appears that the presentation of these cakes was an offering and a sacrifice by the people to God. It was an offering of a portion of their substance to stand in close contiguity to the glorious Shekinah, and it was elevated into a sacrifice by the consecrating element of salt being sprinkled upon it, by the frankincense being burned upon it, and the wine being poured out as a libation. The burning of the frankincense was symbolic of prayers arising from the hearts of the people for the acceptance of the offering, and transfigured an act of devotion

into one of sacrifice, thereby demonstrating the pure spirituality of idea with which corn and wine were presented in the presence of the Holiest.

This was also "a covenant on behalf of the people." It was a perpetual renewal of the covenant entered into by them with Jehovah. Bread and wine were the staple food of Israel. They really formed the diet of the people. The land grew fine wheat plentifully, the vineyards were cultivated by all the rural population, and the fruit of the vine was both luscious to the taste and enormous in quantity. Wine presses and wine vats were on every holding. Corn and wine were common to rich and poor. This was the fulfilment of God's covenant with the patriarchs and Moses. "And God give thee of the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine" (Gen. 27²⁸). "And it shall come to pass, because ye hearken to these judgements and keep and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep with thee the covenant and the mercy which He sware unto thy fathers: and He will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: He will also bless the fruit of thy body and the fruit of thy ground, thy corn and thy wine and thine oil, the increase of thy kine and the young of thy

flock, in the land which He swore unto thy fathers to give thee" (Deut. 7^{12, 13}).

The memorials of God's faithfulness to His covenant were ever before the eyes of the people; in the harvests which waved in their fields or were stored in their barns, in the vines which were heavy with rich fruitage, or the wines which filled their wineskins. As this was so, the people were required to place the wheaten cakes and the wine on the table in the Holy Place continually, so that a symbolic expression of national gratitude, of perpetual covenant-keeping, might be in the Presence of the Holy One of Israel. For this purpose the Table of Shewbread was appointed to stand on the outer side of the veil, before the Ark over which brightened the Shekinah. On the other side of the veil within the Ark was preserved the golden pot having manna, which became a constant reminder of God's unfailing intervention for His people in their deepest extremity. One symbol answered to the other. The pot of manna told of an unfailing Providence, the cakes and wine told of a people fully consecrated by covenant to God. Thus they declared that as they were God's people, He should be their God; they would serve and worship Him alone; His law must be their rule, His will their constant pleasure.

Anxious care was taken by the psalmists and prophets of Israel to impress the people with the great truth that the mere presentation of a few cakes of bread or the pouring forth of a few flagons of wine could not alone be acceptable to God. These things could not enrich Him who created and upheld a universe. This offering could only be accepted by God as an expression of spiritual devotion and sincere service. "Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High. Whoso offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving glorifieth Me" (Ps. 50^{14, 23}). "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. . . . Thou shalt delight in the sacrifices of righteousness" (Ps. 51^{17, 19}). "Let them offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare His works with singing" (Ps. 107²²). "Bring no more vain oblations . . . I cannot do with iniquity and the solemn meeting" (Isa. 1¹³).

This lesson of spiritual life and service is enforced with yet greater emphasis in the New Testament. The new Covenant whereby the fulness of the Holy Spirit is assured unto us through Jesus Christ must be honoured in us by constant thankfulness and ungrudging service. So the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews

closes his inimitable gospel of spiritual realities by exhorting: "Then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to His Name. But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13^{15, 16}).

CHAPTER XII

THE LAVER

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THE various symbolic articles commanded to be placed in the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies have now passed in review, and coming to the forecourt of the tabernacle, two pieces of furniture were placed therein—the altar of burnt offering and the laver. The burnt offering has been already treated of, and the laver is the only matter requiring notice.

Into the forecourt any devout member of the congregation might enter. This is to be inferred from the fact that in the sacrifices to be presented upon the altar the offerer's hands were to be placed upon the head of the victim. In the erection of the temple the court was included within the sacred enclosure, which was specially called "the sanctuary." A full view of the ceremonies which were performed there was easily obtained, and indeed those who came to offer sacrifice were allowed to enter the

Priests' Court to lay their hands on the animal's head.

The instructions given as to the laver are these: "Thou shalt make a laver of brass,¹ and the base thereof of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. And Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat. When they go into the tent of meeting, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire unto the Lord: so they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not" (Ex. 30¹⁸⁻²¹). "And he made the laver of brass, and the base thereof of brass, of the mirrors of the serving women which served at the door of the tent of meeting" (Ex. 38⁸). "And thou shalt

¹ Brass is a mixture of copper and zinc, but there is no evidence to show that this amalgam was known to the ancients at this period of their history. Bronze, *i.e.* a mixture of copper and tin, was in use at this time, and might have been the material of which the laver was composed. It is quite as probable that it was made simply of copper, the use of which was common in all the ancient nations even in prehistoric times. The Egyptians were specially skilled in its use, and manufactured it into many articles of use and ornament. They had the art also of polishing it to the highest degree of excellence. As there is some uncertainty on the subject, the old word is retained. See Smith's and Hasting's *Dict. of Bible in loco*.

anoint the laver and its base, and sanctify it. . . . And he set the laver between the tent of meeting and the altar, and put water therein, to wash withal. And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat: when they went into the tent of meeting, and when they came near unto the altar, they washed; as the Lord commanded Moses" (Ex. 40¹¹. 30-32).

The laver was not placed on the direct line between the door of the court and the altar, but a little on one side towards the south. It was replaced, so far as the washing of the priests was concerned, by the Molten Sea placed by Solomon in the temple he built, and which was a most elaborate and expensive construction. But ten lavers were also placed in the temple for the washing of portions of the animals presented in sacrifice in accordance with the boundless ideas of expenditure indulged in by the great king. The laver in the tabernacle must have been of large size, as a great quantity of water was needed for cleansing purposes. No idea is given as to its form or appearance, but it is generally supposed to have been round in shape, and the body to have been separated from its base or foot, into which no doubt it was made to fit. The Rabbis declare that at first it had two spouts, which conveyed the water from the

laver itself into its base; but in the temple the Molten Sea had twelve, in order that the twelve priests who had to serve in connection with the daily sacrifice might all cleanse themselves at the same time. In the first laver there was never less water than could be used by four priests at once. The manner of the washing of the priests was thus: each one laid his right hand upon his right foot, and his left hand upon his left foot, and stood, stooping down and washing both hands and feet together. If any man performed his office unwashen he was liable to death. None might enter the court to do service until he had bathed, and all, even in winter, must stand upon the bare pavement. The ablutions practised by the priests became more frequent as time wore on. In the temple period those who were fulfilling their rota of duty often rose through the night and took a bath in an apartment prepared for the purpose, and where a lamp was kept burning. Before cock-crowing the whole retinue of the priests on duty arose and bathed. When the principal officiating priest drew near to the altar to take coals of fire from it, his companions cried out, "Touch no sacred vessel until thou hast sanctified thy hands and feet at the laver."

The laver was constructed from the brazen

mirrors of the women who assembled at the door of the tabernacle. The reason why these were used was probably that the metal was of the finest kind, capable of taking a high polish, so that the priests might not only have proper convenience for washing, but also a surface of perfect clearness in which they might be reflected, and by which they might see that they were free from defilement.

The mirrors had probably been brought out of Egypt at the Exodus. Many representations of women engaged in worship in Egyptian temples still exist on ancient monuments, and in most cases they hold a mirror in their left hand. The art of making mirrors was brought to a high state of perfection in Egypt, and specimens of them are still found occasionally in the ancient tombs.

The women referred to as serving at the door of the tabernacle are stated by the Rabbis to be a body of pious women, who even in the morning of Judaism gave themselves much to fasting and prayer. Therefore they were often to be found frequenting the approaches of the tent of meeting, as in the temple there was a special "court of the women" provided, where they might gather for prayer and worship. The Septuagint version describes them as "the

fasting women which fasted at the door of the tabernacle." The Targum of Onkelos renders the word translated "fasting" by "praying." Ben Ezra has this comment on the passage: "It is the custom of all women to look at their faces in looking-glasses every morning either of brass or glass, that they may see to dress their heads; but behold there were women in Israel, that served the Lord, that departed from this worldly delight, and gave away their glasses as a freewill offering, for they had no more use for them; but they came every day to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation to pray, and hear the words of the commandments." There is one important corroboration of this opinion in the New Testament. "And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher (she was of a great age, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity, and she had been a widow even for fourscore and four years), which departed not from the temple, worshipping with fastings and supplications night and day" (Luke 2^{36. 37}).

The association of the altar and the laver in the court was peculiarly significant. The altar meant sacrifice; it symbolised life and service devoted to the Divine glory. But the laver

signified purification, and this must be conjoined with the other. Through the sacrifice for sin, salvation from sin was made possible. The duty of self-sacrifice to God was imperative, but the cleansing was absolutely necessary also. There was a clear distinction made in Scripture between the forgiveness of sin and the cleansing from its guilt and pollution, between justification and sanctification. This is admirably put by the Exile of Patmos: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jno. 1⁹). The cleansing which is here spoken of is the entire sanctification of those engaged in the Divine service, which the laver was intended to symbolise. It proclaimed the great aim and purpose of Christianity. These were purification simple and complete. Other systems of religion are content to teach merely ceremonial purity or official sanctity; even the heaven set forth by some of them is morally unclean. But the gospel enforces purity throughout, and nothing less than absolute purity. The old Jews clearly understood this. David said: "I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass Thy altar, O Lord" (Ps. 26⁶). And when he uttered the deepest penitential wail of the world, he said: "Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward

parts; and in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps. 51^{6, 7}).

The symbol of washing with pure water in association with the house of God and His service was easy to be understood by the devout and responsive soul of the ancient Church. Therefore it is that the writings of the prophets are full of denunciations of pretentious formalities, of empty perfunctoriness, of vain ceremonialism, and with flaming earnestness the seer exhorted: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well" (Isa. 1¹⁶).

In emphasising this essential principle of true religion, Judaism was especially significant of the teaching of Christ. The very name He was to bear was controlled by this idea: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for it is He that shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1²¹). The first public recognition of Him by His forerunner declared it: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!" (Jno. 1²⁹). The ministry of the Christ was pervaded with it, from His initiatory sermon on the mountain-side, crying, "Blessed are the pure in heart," to the noble intercessory prayer offered on the

verge of Gethsemane: "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil" (Jno. 17¹⁵). What the Saviour enforced the apostles preached: "The God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly: and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame, at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5²³). "According to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Tit. 3⁵. 6). "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water" (Heb. 10²²).

Thus the testimony of God in all ages is the same—an entire purification of human nature as the only condition of its honour and happiness. To this also give the patriarchs, Moses, and the prophets witness. This result was symbolised by the laver. This, as the end of redemption, was proclaimed by Christ and His glorious messengers. This is the latest benediction of Holy Writ: "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city" (Rev. 22¹⁴).

CHAPTER XIII

THE ABOLITION OF SYMBOLISM: THE VEIL BEFORE THE HOLIEST

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THE Holy Place in the tabernacle and temple was divided from the Holiest by a veil of fine material, of richest dyes and of skilful embroidery. It was commanded to be of "fine twined linen," carefully and perfectly woven; it was to be of blue and purple and scarlet dyes, the blue symbolising, so the old Rabbis say, Divinity; the scarlet, Humanity; and the purple, the union or association of the two; and there were to be embroidered upon it by deft fingers figures of the glorious cherubim, golden images of which were placed upon the Ark of the Covenant in the Holiest. It was to be suspended upon four pillars of acacia wood overlaid with gold, and four hooks of gold let into sockets of silver bore the weight thereof.

The Holiest, which has been previously described, was a small apartment wherein were

placed the Ark of the Covenant and other precious things. It was peculiarly the shrine of Jehovah, because there shone the flame of the Divine Presence, which was the glory of Israel and the sign of an Indwelling God for many generations.

The veil was never allowed to become worn or dulled. A fresh veil was prepared periodically—in the later days of the nation once a year—and was hung up upon the hooks of gold, so that it never looked faded, threadbare, or moth-eaten, like many of the tapestries in our baronial mansions or castles, but was always bright and beautiful before the eyes of the beholders.

The signification of the instructions given as to the materials and position of the veil require to be carefully considered.

The veil as it hung before the Holiest, shrouding it from common gaze or entrance, obstructed the brightness of the Shekinah, so that at the most its rays could only fall with partial radiance upon the Holy Place. The folds of the veil could not be lifted or drawn aside, but the Holiest was guarded and preserved in continual loneliness, save upon the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest, and he alone, was permitted to enter behind the veil and stand in the presence of the glory of the Lord.

The priests bowed in worship in the Holy Place, but the people were beyond, not permitted to draw nigh, but standing without in solemn awe. Why was this? Was it meet that the creature should be exiled from the presence of the Creator, and that the child should be barred out from his Father? It was not always so. There was a time when there was no officiating priest as a go-between, or mediator between God and man; when man could meet with God and God condescended to walk with man. Why the barrier, the distance, the exclusion? It was because man had sinned; and sin separates, it cuts man off from God, it makes him an alien, a wanderer, a prodigal. The sense of shame and guilt makes him fly from the Divine presence, the want of purity and righteousness prevents fellowship and association, the position of man as a transgressor of the Divine law imposes upon him the penalty of being cut off from the privileges of sonship and friendship. This is essentially the nature of sin. It separates man from God, and from all holiness and happiness. It divides man and man; it is ever disintegrating nations, tribes, families, households; making discords, divisions, and breaking humanity into diverse sections and hostile companies. Given sin in full power without check or rein, and it

will spread bitterness, hatred, alienation throughout the world, and peace would be a beautiful name of an absent and lost treasure. Therefore the veil testified of the bitter nature and spirit of man's transgression.

But it also testified in a wonderful way of God's infinite tenderness and compassion. As it hung before the brightness it became a kind of transparency through which the glory fell with softened glow and filled the Holy Place with a blessed illumination. In later days this was not so, because the brightness had gone, and the nation had lost its palladium and its crowning glory. Then the veil became thick, heavy, and massive. The linen was folded many times together and the embroidery was more elaborate, as though by artificial ornamentation compensation could be had for the absence of the Shekinah. But in earlier and simpler days, when the nation was young, and its heart, if wayward, was yet tender, the glory shone behind, and its brightness fell through the richly dyed linen, so that all might know, and that some might see and bear witness, that God had not forsaken man. He had built a house in the midst of the people; He had a peculiar apartment where He specially revealed His presence, and from whence He spoke from between the cherubim. This could

not be a God of vengeance, full of bitterness and anger, desiring only the punishment of His erring sons. This was no Jupiter seated on Mount Olympus, launching thunderbolts of wrath, flaming with fire and winged with destruction. No, the God that dwelt in the midst of the camp, that shone in the Holiest, whose rays percolated through the veil, who permitted the people, whilst *they* could not draw nigh, to send their representative with a sacrifice of blood (because blood is the life), into His immediate presence, that it might be poured out before Him, and that upon this ground He might pardon and save, could not be considered a God like unto Moloch, or Baal, or Astarte. This was a God loving the prodigal, desiring his return to home and truth, yearning over him with boundless love, inviting him back to purity, opening out a way whereby he might become again the possessor of peace and joy. So that if the veil was a testimony against the evil of sin on the one hand, it was equally a witness to the love and tenderness of the Father upon the other.

The veil was peculiarly fitted as hanging before the glory in the Holiest to operate powerfully in fulfilling the great end of Mosaic symbolism. This was to suggest and to incite; to lead priests and people to inquire as to what

these things meant, and whither they were leading. The educating and inspiring influence exercised by the beautiful veil, shrouding the Holiest and the sacred mysteries which annually were performed behind it, it is scarcely possible to realise. Nothing about the tabernacle indicated Divine realities more eloquently, or aided a devout soul to grasp more clearly the eternal substances which the symbols represented.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews points out another great factor in human redemption which the veil symbolised, viz. the Incarnation of the Lord Jesus: "The way which He dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Heb. 10²⁰). This, as many commentators hold, refers to the two natures, Divine and human, in the one glorious Person of our Saviour. As the veil became the vehicle by which the presence of God was interpreted to man, so the veil of a perfectly sinless human nature became the transparency through and by which God revealed Himself to man. The New Testament declares this with emphasis. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father" (John 1¹⁴). "God . . . hath . . . spoken unto us in His Son . . . who being

the effulgence of His glory and the very image of His substance," etc. (Heb. 1². 3). The Saviour Himself said, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14⁹). What could be so fitting or convenient? If God had to speak to man, a human voice and human language were the only suitable, or indeed possible, instruments; if Divine holiness, or love, or power were to be set before man—universal man—then for them to be embodied in a human nature and a human character was the only sufficient and abiding method; and so the glorious humanity of Jesus was taken up into the Godhead, and transfused and transfigured with His ineffable perfections. The veil became the most striking symbol of this marvel of the universe.

But in the fulness of the times the symbols had fulfilled their mission, and the signal for their abolition was a solemn and striking one. The great world tragedy was in full progress on Calvary. The Christ for whom the world had yearned and sighed, the world now rejected, mocked, and killed. But His death was the birthday of a new world and a new régime. It was the consummation of promise and prophecy, of type and symbol, of figures and images. It was the bringing in of the realities and substances, the facts and verities long adumbrated and pre-

figured. Therefore the symbols must be abolished. Up to that point they had exhibited and illustrated; now they would divert from the truth and intercept it. So long they had been stepping-stones to Christ; but unless removed, they would become hindrances and stopping-places. Therefore, as the great redeeming act of Calvary culminated in the last agony of death, the Christ cried, "IT IS FINISHED"; and whilst Nature shuddered at the sufferings of her Lord, the great symbolic system of Judaism, which for fifty generations had been witnessing for God and Christ to the Jews and the nations, came to an end, abolished by will of the Eternal Father in the marvellous act: "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."

There are several truths of the first importance to be learned from this startling and all-important event.

It was the definite testimony of the Eternal Father to the all-sufficiency of the Atonement then made upon the cross. The veil was hung up to signify exclusion from the Divine presence; it was torn down to show that on Calvary every hindrance was removed, and that now men "might draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." It was the *imprimatur* of the court of heaven upon the Son's great sacrifice

made upon earth ; it was the Father's *Amen* to the Son's announcement of the completion of His "finished work" ; it was, in effect, the Lord saying once more, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." No need now of the sacrifice of the bullock or the goat, the lamb or the pigeon. Christ had offered a spotless, holy human nature, closely united to the Divine Nature, by which there was infused into the sacrifice such virtue and preciousness, as that it never needed to be repeated and so that it availed for the whole world.

The rent veil taught another great lesson. By it men are shown that now God does not speak to man by types and symbols, nor even by the personal ministry of the Lord Jesus. The pictures and figures of Mosaism in the world's infancy had a great work to do, and very efficiently they did it. But when these have played their part, if they are not succeeded by a higher style of teaching, and by more advanced truth, they arrest the growth of the human mind and stamp it with permanent littleness. Therefore the symbols were succeeded by the personal life, teaching, and sacrifice of the long-promised Christ. But these could be only temporary by the very necessities of the case. Christ could not have been an itinerating preacher through

the ages ; or if He had, where would have been His ministry of intercession in the highest heaven, and where could have been the ministry of the Holy Spirit ? Therefore, when three and a half years of public teaching had gone, He said to His college of students, " It is expedient for you that I go away," " But I will pray the Father, and He will give unto you another Comforter, that He may be with you for ever." " He shall convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement," " He shall take of Mine and shall declare it unto you," " He shall be with you for ever," " He shall teach you all things," " He shall guide you into all truth."

Therefore Christ rose into the highest heavens, and from that time has appeared there as the Representative and Friend of man, making continual intercession in his behalf. Therefore also the Divine Spirit did come, and has carried on His great ministry in the hearts and consciences of men, producing conviction of sin, leading to repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ; then becoming the guide, teacher, helper of the believer, witnessing with his spirit that he is a son of God, sealing him as an heir of heaven, presiding over his education in holiness until he is " meet to be a partaker of

the inheritance of the saints in light." So that now God does not make Himself known by the symbols, nor by a personal itinerating local ministry, but directly, spiritually, personally, by a direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the Adorable Godhead, who "breathes upon the word and brings the truth to sight," who draws the sinner to Jesus, and then guides him to heaven itself.

That this might be, "the veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom," and Christ "through His own blood entered in once for all into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9¹²).

This being so, how vain and profane, how puerile and inane, how dishonouring to God and ruinous to man, must be the efforts now being made to hang up, as in olden time, the veil of ceremonialism and symbolism once more! The offering of the Mass, the burning of incense, the elaborate robes, the bowings and genuflexions, the wax candles upon the altar, the revival of mediæval shows in the churches, and the appeals made to the outward senses rather than to the reason and conscience—all this must be an excrescence upon the gospel of truth and love, displeasing to God and paralysing to real godliness.

The symbols, save those simple ones appointed in Baptism and the Lord's Supper, are unnecessary. We need no local building to assure us that God will in very deed dwell upon the earth, since He, the Eternal Son, hath tabernacled with us in human nature; we need no officiating priesthood, nor sacrificial altars, nor offerings of blood, when our Great High Priest has offered Himself a Sacrifice which needs no repetition, but avails for all the world and all time; we need no golden lamp stand to burn, casting its rays upon the darkness, when "the Light of the World" has risen upon us with "healing in His wings"; we need no table of shewbread, when "the bread of life" is offered to all perpetually "without money and without price"; we need no laver or Molten Sea wherein to wash the extremities of the body, when there is "a fountain open for sin and uncleanness," where all may be made "whiter than snow"; we need no golden cherubim to represent the noblest types of creaturehood, when we have Christ, the prime and flower and glory of creation, abiding in our very hearts; and we need no consecrating oil or incense, when the Holy Spirit becomes by His indwelling the earnest and seal of our eternal blessedness. "When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away"

(1 Cor. 13¹⁰). And now we rise above the sign to the substance; we turn from the portrait to the living presence of the long-anticipated Christ; we rise above localities and materialisms to universal truths and spiritual realities. Thus we have glorious liberty, and in these priceless revelations and fellowships shall the sanctified soul expand and expatiate for evermore.

Above all, the rent veil teaches that now every man may come directly into the Holiest. There is no intercepting veil, there is no order of officiating priests; there is only one great High Priest, who is on the throne and behind the veil, and by whom "the new and living way is dedicated," that the chief of sinners may draw nigh to God.

It must have been an appalling experience, when at the moment of the Saviour's death the heavens darkened, the earth reeled, and the veil was rent. How the priests fell prone before the altar in the Holy Place! how everyone within sight or beyond must have palpitated with terror, not knowing what catastrophe was about to happen! Then when recollectedness returned, one after another turned a trembling eye towards the Holiest and peered in even to its farthest recesses. What could be seen there? Not the Ark, nor the cherubim, nor the tables of testi-

mony,—these had been carried into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar centuries before, and must have perished there,—but there was to be seen a plain stone altar, upon which the blood of atonement had been sprinkled every year, without any intermission, since the days of persecution, when Antiochus Epiphanes had a swine slain in the Holiest to lacerate the Jews in their tenderest spot. But it was open now, and it is open evermore; and from that high throne which the Saviour occupies as His sanctuary He speaks to all, saying, “Wherefore come boldly to a throne of grace, that ye may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

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